Bruce Sterling: Watching the Clouds

PDC58970

Fantasy & Science Fiction

JANUARY

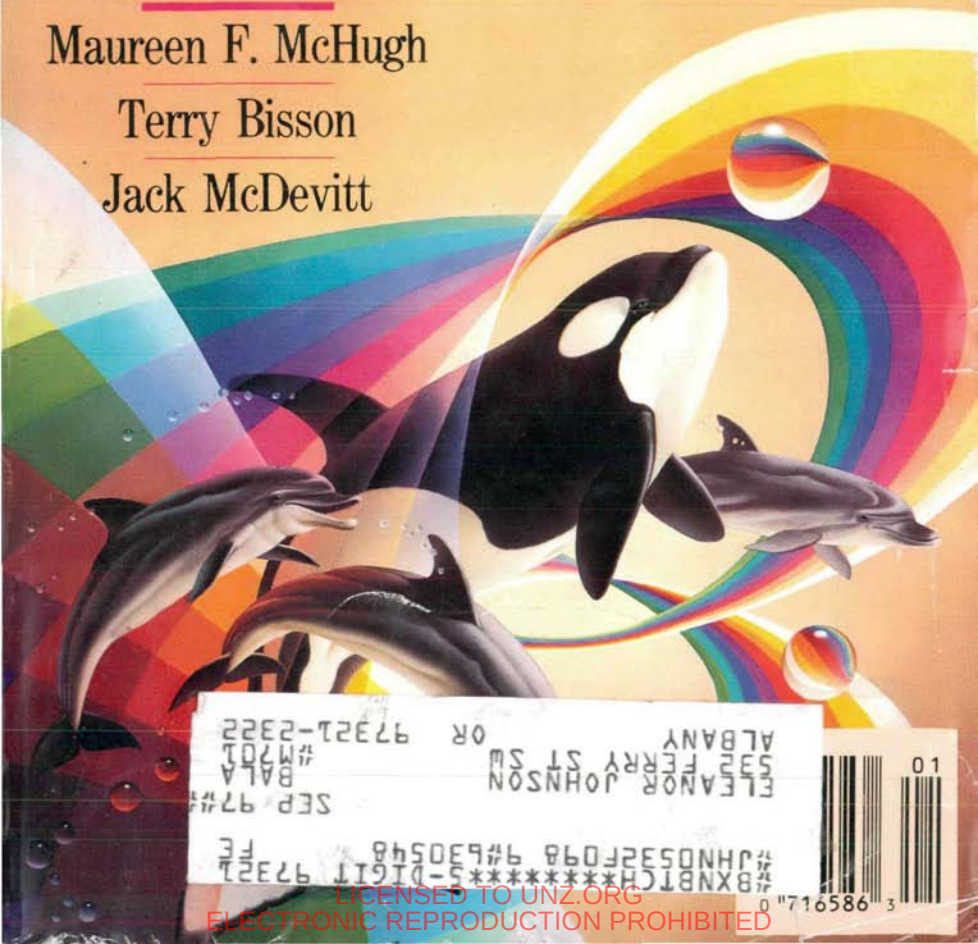
$2.75 US • CANADA $3.50

Filter Feeders
Ray Aldridge

Maureen F. McHugh

Terry Bisson

Jack McDevitt

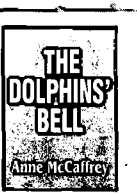


LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

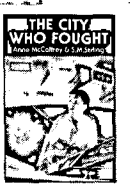
"LOOK AT THE WORLDS A HUMAN CAN EXPLORE FOR JUST $1!"

8607 $22.00/**$11.98**

7195 $20.00/**$7.98**

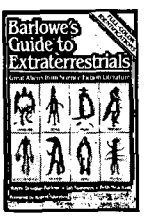


8995 **$6.98x**

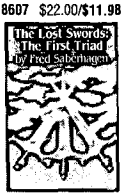


8268 $19.00/**$8.98**

6585 $20.00/**$9.98**

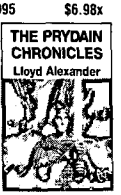


6916 **$12.98x**



7260 *Woundhealer's Story, Sightblinder's Story, Stonecutter's Story*
$45.85#/**$12.98**

5017 *Farslayer's Story, Coinspinner's Story, Mindsword's Story*
$50.85#/**$13.98**



5595 All 5 novels plus *The Foundling & Other Stories*
$83.70#/**$14.98**

5652 *Dragon's Gold, Serpent's Silver, Chimaera's Copper*
$14.98x

5660 *Orc's Opal, Mouvar's Magic*
$37.90#/**$12.98**

4747 *So You Want to Be a Wizard, Deep Wizardry, High Wizardry*
$45.85#/**$12.98**

HERE'S WHAT YOU GET WHEN YOU JOIN...

A GUARANTEE OF SATISFACTION. Once your membership's accepted, we'll send your 5 BOOKS. If you're dissatisfied with the books, return them within 10 days *at our expense*. Membership will be canceled; you'll owe nothing.

HUGE DISCOUNTS ON HARDCOVER BOOKS. Save as much as 65% off publishers' edition prices. Club books are sometimes altered in size to fit special presses.

THE FREE CLUB MAGAZINE. You'll receive up to 16 issues a year. Each reviews the Featured Book Selection(s) plus dozens of alternate books.

SHOPPING MADE SIMPLE. To get the Featured Book Selection(s), *do nothing*—it will be sent automatically. If you prefer another book—or none at all—return your Member Reply Form by the specified date. A shipping and handling charge (and sales tax, where applicable) is added to each order.

AN EASY-TO-MEET OBLIGATION. Take up to 2 years to buy 4 more books at regular low Club prices. Afterwards, you may resign membership anytime.

RISK-FREE RETURN PRIVILEGES. If you get an unwanted book because your Club magazine was delayed and you had less than 10 days to respond, simply return the book *at our expense.*

* Explicit scenes and/or language # Combined publishers' editions
x Hardcover edition exclusively for Club members
+ ® & © 1993 Lucasfilm Ltd. All Rights Reserved. Used Under Authorization.
++ Copyright © 1993 Paramount Pictures. All Rights Reserved. STAR TREK is a Registered Trademark of Paramount Pictures.
◊ Copyright © 1992 by DC Comics, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Published by arrangement with Warner Books, Inc./New York. Cover photo courtesy of Warner Bros.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

8649 $25.00/$12.98

6015 $22.00/$10.98

8656 $22.00/$10.98

4994 $7.98x

2113* $27.95/$14.98

8631+ $21.95/$8.98

6536++ $22.00/$10.98

91180 $19.95/$9.98

6445 $10.98x

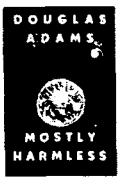
6213 $18.95/$10.98

7575 $7.98x

6544 $18.00/$8.98

7609* *The Book of the Damned, The Book of the Beast* $39.90#/$10.98

5264 *The Book of the Dead, The Book of the Mad* $39.90#/$10.98



7302 $20.00/$6.98

6601 $22.95/$11.98

8961* $7.98x

9092 $20.95/$9.98

Choose any 5 books for $1 with membership

Prices in fine print are publishers' hardcover editions. **Prices in bold print are Club hardcover editions.**

THE Science Fiction BOOK CLUB®

MAIL TO: *The Science Fiction Book Club*
6550 East 30th Street
P.O. Box 6367
Indianapolis, IN 46206-6367

Please write book numbers here:

YES! Please enroll me in *The Science Fiction Book Club* according to the risk-free membership plan described in this ad. Send me the 5 BOOKS I've indicated. Bill me just $1, plus shipping and handling.

SAVE MORE—BUY YOUR FIRST BOOK NOW FOR $2.98
☐ Send me the book I've indicated and reduce my commitment to only 3 more books. Bill me an additional $2.98, plus shipping and handling.

(write book number)

47985 33

47986 31

Mr./Mrs. _____
Miss/Ms. _____
(please print)

Address _____ Apt. _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

If you're under 18, your parent must sign here _____

Members accepted in U.S.A. and Canada only. Canadian members serviced from Canada, where offer is slightly different. Sales tax added where applicable. We reserve the right to reject any application.

MFS 1/94

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE MAGAZINE OF
Fantasy & Science Fiction

JANUARY • 45th Year of Publication

NOVELETS

FILTER FEEDERS 5 Ray Aldridge

WHEN JOY CAME TO THE WORLD 123 L. Timmel Duchamp

SHORT STORIES

GRANNY WOMAN 33 Lynn Coulter

JUKEBOX GIFTS 42 Dean Wesley Smith

PARTIAL PEOPLE 68 Terry Bisson

PLANET OF THE DOLPHINS 71 Robert A. Metzger

VIRTUAL LOVE 95 Maureen F. McHugh

STANDARD CANDLES 106 Jack McDevitt

DEPARTMENTS

FILMS: DINO MIGHT 62 Kathi Maio

SCIENCE: WATCHING THE CLOUDS 87 Bruce Sterling

CARTOONS: HENRY MARTIN (86) ARTHUR MASEAR (158).
COVER BY ILENE MEYER FOR "PLANET OF THE DOLPHINS"

EDWARD L. FERMAN, Publisher — KRISTINE KATHRYN RUSCH, Editor
CHERYL CASS, Circulation Manager — AUDREY FERMAN, Assistant Publisher
BOB HOWE, ROBIN O'CONNOR, Assistant Editors — HARLAN ELLISON, Film Editor

The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction (ISSN 0024-984X), Volume 86, No. 1, Whole No. 512, January 1994. Published monthly except for a combined October/November issue by Mercury Press, Inc. at $2.75 per copy. Annual subscription $26.00; $31.00 outside of the U.S. (Canadian subscribers: please remit in U.S. dollars.) Postmaster: send form 3579 to Fantasy & Science Fiction, 143 Cream Hill Rd., West Cornwall, CT 06796. Publication office, 143 Cream Hill Rd., West Cornwall, CT 06796. Second class postage paid at West Cornwall, CT 06796, and at additional mailing offices. Printed in U.S.A. Copyright © 1993by Mercury Press, Inc. All rights, including translations into other languages, reserved.

GENERAL OFFICE: 143 CREAM HILL RD., WEST CORNWALL, CT 06796
EDITORIAL OFFICE: PO BOX 11526, EUGENE, OR 97440

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

EDITORIAL

KRISTINE KATHRYN RUSCH

DURING AN April visit to Harlan and Susan Ellison's house in Los Angeles, I posed a question to Harlan: If you were going to show someone unfamiliar with science fiction an sf film, which one would it be? When I had asked others this question, they had responded with *Blade Runner* or *2001*. Harlan surprised me. He named a film I had never heard of: *Seconds*.

Made in 1966, directed by John Frankenheimer and written by Louis John Carlino (based on the book by David Ely), *Seconds* stars Rock Hudson in an unusually grim and brooding performance. The film is black and white; it also contains many features I usually hate in mid-sixties films — too-close, surrealistic camera angles; cool, self-contained characters; and odd unexplained moments. Yet those features fit *Seconds*.

The movie is the story of a middle-aged man who receives a second chance at life. He gets involved with a company that fakes his death and completely makes him over, giving him a new life without personal attachments as well as giving him money and an established career. The surrealistic camera angles show the man's perspective on life: his alienation and his fear. The characters are self-contained as part of the story — the piece is about their isolation. And, best of all, the odd, unexplained moments fit into the plot.

The ending, while inevitable, left me stunned and contemplative. Even though I have seen four films in the weeks since, the one I remember is *Seconds*.

Why does a 1966 film haunt me? For two reasons. The first comes from a comment Harlan made when he recommended the movie. He said it would show the sf neophyte that the best science fiction stories can be told without big budgets and special effects. The special effects in *Seconds* consist of a needle-filled operating scene and a few artists sketches

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

— certainly nothing that would put Industrial Light and Magic out of business. The film only had a handful of sets, and those were as familiar as your own backyard. Yet the film had an sf feel. The things happening to Rock Hudson could not happen in 1966 or even now without some major technological advances. By taking our world and twisting it ever so slightly, the film creates a place both alien and familiar, a place in which our own lives can be illuminated.

And the movie does illuminate our lives. Even thirty years after the fact, the movie's theme, of a person's desire for a chance to try again in life, is still relevent. And the insights the movie offers are at once fresh and horrifying.

Too often, science fiction focuses on the idea at the expense of the character, on special effects at the expense of true vision. Such things happen in short stories as well as in movies. Writers get lost in a stupendous world without making it important to today's readers. Or writers forget that a story has no heart without real characters.

When I speak in front of writers groups, I beg for more good science fiction stories. But by that, I do not mean stories in which the idea takes over the human tale. I want stories that haunt me for weeks — months — afterward, just as *Seconds* is haunting me now. When an sf story appears in these pages, it appears because I believe the story has heart first and nifty sf ideas second. For what is the importance of a tale told merely to explicate an idea? An essay does the job much better. A story must show the effect of the sf idea on the people (and read into that word beings — both human and alien) around it.

We often forget that in this age of mobile telephones and million dollar movie budgets. We forget that when we give a man an artificial heart, his family still paces in the hospital waiting room. We also forget that when the surgery is over, he must go home and face the life the technological miracle has given him.

Seconds may be a wonderful film to show someone who is unfamiliar with science fiction. It may not. But I do know that it is an excellent film to show a jaded sf reader — because the film's deceptive simplicity reminds us all of our roots.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ray Aldridge returns to F&SF *after too long an absence. He is now the proud father of three children. The new baby took some time away from his writing, but he promises more short work in the future.*

Recently his short fiction has received quite a bit of acclaim, with two Nebula finalists under his belt. He has also written three novels, published by Bantam Books.

"Filter Feeders" is not hard sf. Instead it is one of the most delicately written dark fantasies we have published.

Filter Feeders

By Ray Aldridge

THE HERON HUNTED THE water's edge. Across the inlet the sun's red disk settled to the rippled line of the dunes. Minnows flickered in the darkening water, tasty silver life, quickly receding. The heron gave all his attention to his hunting, crouching on stick legs, head low, snaky neck drawn back for the strike.

The sailboat ghosted in on the dying evening breeze, sails rattling softly. The heron glanced up for a moment — sometimes humans threw him stale bait, sometimes they tried to hit him with beer bottles — but the human steering the boat seemed a motionless lump, neither promising nor dangerous.

There in the water, a twisting gleam moved slowly enough that the heron knew he could catch it, and he moved forward with a quick jerking stride, his neck tensing.

But as his beak stabbed, a consuming sensation broke over him, a memory of frightening power. He found himself back in the rookery, the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

night filled with the squawk and rustle of the others, the scent of the pines, the faint purple glow of the Coast Guard station's lights filtering through the trees.

He felt some strong emotion — a human might have called it happiness — remembering a thousand such nights along the bay. He felt it with an intensity far beyond the natural capacity of his primitive brain.

Memories flowed through him: mornings waiting with the other herons on the concrete footings of the bridge, watching for delicacies riding in on the tide. Walking a weathered dock, sun warm on his feathers. Flying against sunset skies, high in the pure air. And countless other remembrances, all clothed in some precious subtle perfection.

He remembered the nest, a heap of sticks in the girders of a range marker. He felt with an undiminished intensity the warmth of his mother's down, the satisfaction of tearing at his first fish, the fearful delight of leaving that safe haven.

At the very last he felt a suffocating pleasure, as he broke from the darkness of the egg into the world of light and experience.

The heron finished his strike, beak slicing into the water. The long neck relaxed, the body fell forward, empty of life.

The boat's rippling wake rolled the heron's corpse gently against the sand, and from the cabin came a sound like a sob, or a laugh.

For the longest time, Teresa continued to believe she was on the brink of glorious change. Soon. Next year, at the latest. Or if not then, the year after.

By her thirty-sixth year, she'd grown less hopeful. That summer she came to the Gulf and took a job waiting tables at The Bugeyed Sailor in Destin.

Just as the sun went down an old white-hulled ketch sailed into the harbor. Teresa watched from the outside deck of the Bugeyed Sailor, where she was serving a pair of drunk Louisiana businessmen.

The ketch might have been graceful once, but now it was an old shoe, scuffed and worn. It fetched up on the far side of the harbor, so Teresa couldn't tell much about the person who went forward to drop the anchor, moving like an invalid, with slow exaggerated care. Over the clatter of crockery, she heard the chain rattle out. The person stood motionless on the foredeck.

The light was fading and the boat seemed suddenly unreal, its outlines a little misty.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Hey, honey," said one of the Boys from Baton Rouge, breaking into her imaginings. "How 'bout a few more of these 'uns?" He waved at the empty beer bottles clustered on the table.

"Right away, sir," she chirped, and that was the last notice she took of the boat, that night.

The Bugeyed Sailor clung to a piece of prime harbor waterfront in Destin, the Luckiest Fishing Village in the World.

The Bugeyed Sailor, while it might not actually have been the worst restaurant between Pensacola and Carrabelle, was surely the most notorious. The food was dreadful, but the ambience was worse.

The owner was an obese middle-aged troll who worked hard at augmenting his restaurant's notoriety. Every night the Sailorman dressed up in his stained Popeye costume — a costume the size of a tent but still a little tight. He would admire the obscene tattoos on his huge forearms, he would adjust the tiny hat that clung to his bald head, and then he would work the room. He would move among the tables, trailing a cloud of body odor, leering at the pretty women and the handsome children, slapping the men on the back, asking if all was well and moving on before he had to hear the answer. At unpredictable intervals he would burst into song. He knew only one tune, but many verses. "Oh, I'm Bugeye the Sailorman. I live in a garbage can..." he would sing, in a fairly good tenor. Or, "I love to go swimmin'. With bowlegged wimmin. I'm Bugeye the Sailorman." Occasionally some unamused child would ask him why he didn't use the right name. "Popeye stole *my* song," he would say with a ferocious, green-toothed grin, making his eyes bug out in an illustrative manner.

He played the lunatic genial host until closing. Then he would revert to his true form, the cunning brutal peasant. The help called him Bugger the Sailorman...the phrase also served as a satisfying epithet, to be muttered at every opportunity. The Sailorman's employees left the instant they could land a job elsewhere, which was why he had hired Teresa so readily, despite her obvious inexperience. And also she was still a somewhat attractive woman, not too old, and completely unattached — just the sort of person the Sailorman liked to keep under his dirty thumb. She'd have quit, but summer — and the tourist season — was ending, so the other area businesses were scaling back. Jobs were hard to find.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

That night the Sailorman had devoted himself to harassing Nancy, a waitress who was younger and prettier than Teresa. Teresa's relief was tempered with a pang of guilt...poor Nancy. Then she looked at the Sailorman and thought: better her than me.

After closing, when the chairs were stacked on the tables and she'd given the busboy his share of her tips, she went home to her little room at the Golden Dunes Motel and Cottages. She watched an old movie and drank a cream soda, listening to the creaky whir of the window air-conditioner.

After the movie was over, she performed her bedtime ritual. With other women, she knew, this involved the application of various beautifying substances — but Teresa had largely abandoned hope in that area, as in so many others. Instead she got out her inheritance from her mother, a bottle of Nembutal. She contemplated it, while assessing her resolve. She sighed and thought about her mother.

If only that long-suffering person were still alive, Teresa would still be living at home, still taking the occasional course at the local college. Teresa's faith in glorious change might still be intact. But in fact her mother had died and left her nothing much but the Nembutal, which was so far past its expiration date it probably couldn't do the job anymore.

Just before she fell asleep, she thought of the old ketch, and felt a vague envy for its crew, thinking of all the lovely romantic places the boat must have visited.

Late the next morning she went to her part-time job at the Shipshape Chandlery. Her other boss, Bob Johnson, greeted her cheerfully. Bob was as attractive as the Sailorman was repellent, a tall athletic man with white-blonde hair and the mahogany complexion of Nordics who spend too much time in the sun. Bob would probably be crusty with skin cancer some day, but presently he seemed overwhelmingly healthy. And happily married. Ah well, she'd thought, when he'd told her about his wonderful wife.

"So, how's the novel going?" he asked, as he did faithfully every time he saw her.

"Coming along," she lied, just as faithfully.

"Good, good." He went to the back and began unpacking a shipment of stainless fittings.

For all his regular polite inquiries, Bob no longer attempted to engage her

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in serious conversation regarding her alleged novel. She supposed that by now he understood her well enough.

In fact she owned a portable electric typewriter, a box of typing paper, several hundred pages of notes, and an opening chapter. At increasingly lengthy intervals she got out the opening chapter and retyped it, but she'd long ago realized she was never going to grow up and be Joyce Carol Oates. In the first place, nothing had ever happened to her, so what could she write about? Also, she lacked self-discipline. Luck. Talent. And all the other necessary stuff.

No, she was just one of the multitudes who use an imaginary writing career as an excuse for not having a life. She'd once said, in a burst of rare passion, to someone who didn't care: "When you're sliding downhill toward middle age and you work at shit jobs and you live in motels and you have no lover or child or friend, people want to know *why*. It's nice to have a halfway plausible excuse. And when you have no lover or child or friend, no one's going to care enough about you to try to correct your delusions. It works out fine."

EARLY IN the afternoon she took her break in Bob's upstairs office, which had a fine view out over the harbor. As she sipped her coffee, she again noticed the old ketch, which had either moved or dragged anchor during the night, so that it was now much closer to the mainland side of the harbor.

Teresa could clearly see the woman who emerged from the main hatchway. She had short hair as white as Bob's, and at first Teresa thought it was white-blonde like his. She seemed young, despite the lethargic way she moved. She was thin and brown; she wore stylishly ragged cutoffs and a bathing suit top.

She boarded an old wooden dinghy and began to row ashore. She paused frequently, leaning on her oars as if catching her breath; this added to Teresa's impression that the woman was ill. Finally her dinghy grounded on the strip of dirty sand below the chandlery.

When the woman looked up, Teresa felt a little shock, though not of recognition; the woman was a stranger. Perhaps it was her unusual looks, which were not entirely lost. Actually, Teresa thought, with reluctant admiration, she was still striking, with sweeping brows and large dark eyes.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Her mouth was still wide and rich, her cheekbones dramatic, her skin unwrinkled.

She gazed at Teresa with what seemed a wistful expression. Teresa was abruptly uncomfortable, but she waved, and instantly the woman looked away.

She was at the counter by the time Teresa returned from her break.

"Can you help me?" The white-haired woman had a low soft voice and opaque eyes.

"Sure," Teresa said. "What do you need?"

The woman fumbled a wadded slip of paper from her pocket. She read from it, squinting slightly. She wanted a hundred feet of half-inch dacron braid, a tube of bedding compound, bulbs for the running lights, shaft zincs...and a dozen other items.

"Long list. Been out for a while?" Teresa asked, as she measured out the rope.

"Yes...it seems that way." The woman's eyes went a little cloudier.

"Where'd you come from?"

Her eyes never seemed to meet Teresa's directly, after that first time. Now her gaze slid away, she seemed to be studying the stuffed marlin over the Chandlery's front door. "Isla Mujeres. That was our last port."

"Oh? Was it nice?" Teresa finished bundling the rope and rummaged through the zinc trays. She didn't know why she kept attempting to make conversation. The woman clearly would have preferred an entirely business-like exchange.

"It's nicer than Cancun," the woman answered, uneasily, as if she feared that Teresa would next interrogate her on the specifics of the matter.

But Teresa wasn't bold enough to keep trying. She gathered up the rest of the items and put them in two cardboard boxes. The woman paid, then stood looking at the boxes in perplexity. "I guess I'll make two trips," she said.

"I'll help you," Teresa said, and took the heavier box. Her customer seemed surprised, but smiled dimly.

"Thank you. You're very kind," she said, as though Teresa were doing her a great favor.

Teresa helped the woman load her boxes into the dinghy, and her uncertain movements reinforced the impression that she was ill. She touched Teresa's bare arm lightly, thanked her again.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Teresa felt an inexplicable urge to prolong the acquaintance, such as it was. "Are you staying long? In Destin, I mean?"

The white head shook. "Just a few days. Until the boat's fixed, I guess."

"Is it just you and...your husband?"

"Thomas isn't my husband," the woman answered, in a voice that for the first time was almost alive. She made a strange fierce face; she looked frightened and proud at the same time.

"Oh," Teresa said uncertainly. "Well, if you decide to come ashore for dinner, I can give you some good advice."

"Thomas almost never leaves the boat."

"Is that right?" What an odd thing, Teresa thought. She wanted to ask why, but couldn't. "If you change your mind—and if you value your stomach—don't eat at the Bugeyed Sailor." She laughed. "That's where I work nights, so I know." She felt oddly giddy; she was never so easy with strangers. Only the most charming could get her to talk, and then she mistrusted them for their charm.

"Thank you for the advice," the woman said, and pushed the boat off the beach.

"I'm Teresa Martin," she said. She started to hold out her hand, then didn't, because the dinghy was already sliding away from the shore.

The woman's dark eyes grew darker. "Oh." Then just before she settled down and began to row, Teresa could have sworn she said, "I was Linda...."

Even if Teresa had misunderstood and she wasn't actually referring to herself in the past tense, Teresa had the very strong impression that Linda couldn't remember her own last name.

That night, business was even slower than usual at the Bugeyed Sailor. The Sailorman was savagely bad-tempered; he fired Nancy, who had dropped a plate of rancid scallops en brochette. Nancy fled the premises, weeping and cursing, and Teresa envied her the vitality of her feelings.

She found herself out on the terrace at closing time. The ketch rode on a black mirror, unruffled by even a breath of wind. Light shone dim and golden from a line of portholes along the cabin and made a soft misty fan above a skylight. Teresa wondered what they were talking about, Linda and Thomas, those two intrepid voyagers.

The Sailorman came up behind her on light little fat man's feet. Before

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

she could turn and shrink into a defensive slump, the Sailorman had pulled her against his chest and was kneading her breasts, pinching her nipples painfully. He wore his usual colognes: fish grease, old sweat, cheap rum. She twisted and flailed her elbows and he let her go. "Hey," he said, with a phosphorescent grin. "Where else you gonna get some?"

"Please," she said, hating the pleading in her voice.

He shrugged and made a face, tolerant pity and infantile reproach. "Hey, just trying to help. I don't go where I'm not wanted."

Not until the next time, she thought.

As he went back inside, he said over his shoulder. "But you know, honey, if you don't get laid pretty soon, your pussy gonna scab over. That's what happens to old broads who don't keep it juicy."

In her room after a shower, lying naked in the dark, she still felt bruised and dirty where the Sailorman had touched her. The can of soda rested on her stomach, making a disk of distracting cold there.

"'Scab over,'" she said, feeling a shaky laugh trying to force itself up from her chest.

She'd had chances to avoid that fate since her arrival on the Gulf. There was the UPS driver who delivered parts to the Shipshape Chandlery, a slightly plump man in his early forties. He was very polite, he seemed reasonably worldly despite his grits-and-gravy accent. He'd asked her if she'd like to go to dinner at a nicer place than the Bugeyed Sailor. But how could she take seriously a man who wore Elvis sideburns?

Then there was the young deckhand from one of the charter boats. He'd developed an inexplicable crush on her, even going so far as to risk the food at the Bugeyed Sailor, just so he could flirt with her. He might not have been terribly bright, but he was pretty — tall and sinewy, with clean features and china-blue eyes. But one night he'd suggested they go skinny-dipping in the harbor, and she had been so appalled at the thought of swimming in that soup of sewage and dead fish and spilled diesel that she had said something insulting, which had driven him away.

Just as well, she thought. There were terrible diseases now. And the whole business would certainly have been as messy and forgettable as it had always been in the past.

She wondered about Linda and Thomas aboard their old boat. Were they

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in bed, too? At least they weren't alone. She tried to imagine Thomas. A younger Sterling Hayden, perhaps, a craggy-faced seafarer who couldn't be happy unless he was sailing the blue water? No, her imagination wouldn't have it that way at all. A man who would make his sick girlfriend go ashore alone to do the shopping...he must be some sort of jerk. Did Thomas ever leave his cabin? Teresa was somehow sure it had been Linda who had anchored the boat, that first evening.

Now she was picturing some sort of pale subterranean creature, and she had to laugh. A sea-going vampire. But Linda hadn't seemed anemic, exactly. Mentally anemic? No. Something else. She couldn't put a word to it.

Teresa suddenly felt very tired. She set her soda can aside and pulled up the sheet.

As she drifted into sleep, half-dreams floated up, briefly vivid. Linda, naked, beautiful opaque eyes rolling, mouth open, thin legs wrapped around an amorphous male figure, which plunged into her as tirelessly and forcefully as a slow-motion piston. Linda clawed at her lover, bared her teeth in a grimace of ecstasy or pain.

The image faded, and she dreamed of the old boat riding serenely at anchor, white hull glowing in the shoreside lights. The boat moved to the rhythm of the man-piston, the rolling hull began to generate small ripples. The dim anchor light at the top of the mainmast arced back and forth across the starless sky and the waves spread out over the glassy black water of the harbor.

"Love waves," Teresa murmured, and even at the threshhold of sleep, she was envious.

Linda came into the Chandlery again the next afternoon, and Teresa felt a strange embarrassment, remembering her imaginings in the night.

"I need some flax packing," Linda said in her small voice. "Quarter inch."

Teresa went to get it. When she came back to the counter, Linda was leaning against the counter, looking as though her eyes were about to roll back in her head. Her tan had gone gray, her hands clutched the countertop, white-knuckled.

Teresa darted around the counter and held her up. She was astonishingly light.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Teresa helped her to a bench in the back, settled her there. "Put your head down," she said, and ran to fetch a paper cup of water from the cooler.

When she returned, Linda had dropped her head between her knees, and her trembling hands were interlaced over the nape of her slender bony neck. After a while she took a shuddering breath and sat up. She sipped the water, smiling wanly. "I'm sorry," she said.

"Have you been to a doctor?"

Linda looked vaguely alarmed. "It's nothing, I'm sure. Maybe the heat, the humidity. I'm not used to it, I guess."

Sure, thought Teresa. Linda had just sailed from Isla Mujeres, almost 600 miles south of Destin, right off the Yucatan coast...definitely a cooler, dryer clime.

"Maybe you're hungry," Teresa suggested.

BOB WAS gracious. "Go ahead," he said, giving Linda a brilliant smile, more charming than any smile he'd ever given Teresa. "Take your time, have a good lunch." Teresa felt another illusion crumble. Happily married Bob.

They walked across the highway to a ferny sandwich shop, where Linda showed a respectable appetite.

"Are you a sailor?" Linda asked after a while, dutifully sociable — or so it seemed to Teresa.

"No. Actually, I've never done anything."

"Really?" Linda seemed wistful. "I always said the same thing."

Teresa found this difficult to accept. "I guess that was before you sailed away." Teresa felt a hot pang of resentment. By what right did an attractive adventurer like Linda claim an empty existence? That was Teresa's personal territory.

"Yes, I suppose so."

"But since then you've led a life of wild excitement?"

"In a way." Linda was almost whispering.

For a long time after they were finished with their lunch, they sat there in uncomfortable silence. Teresa eventually concluded that Linda was unwilling to return to the glare and heat of the afternoon. "Well, I suppose I ought to be getting back to work," she said, tentatively.

Linda gave a tiny start, as though she had been sleeping with her eyes

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

open. "I'm sorry. I was just thinking about what you said."

This was an unexpected flattery. Teresa raised her eyebrows.

"Actually," Linda went on, "the sailing isn't all that exciting, to be honest. Seen one wave, seen 'em all." A wounded smile. "And I get seasick."

"Why do you do it?" Teresa was very curious. She might have described her job at the Bugeyed Sailor in much the way Linda had described her life of high adventure. Seen one businessman from Louisiana, seen 'em all. And the grease fumes made her sick.

Linda hesitated. "It's Thomas," she finally said.

"Oh," said Teresa, in deep disappointment. She took the check and slid to the edge of the booth, determined to get away before she had to hear a catalog of the mysterious Thomas's virtues. She didn't think she could stand it; she might scream, she might gag, she might run away and lose all dignity.

But Linda was oblivious. "Thomas made me appreciate my life. He made me understand that it hadn't been empty at all. That it had been as full as anyone's, as joyful as anyone's."

Teresa heard an ambiguous and eerie undertone in Linda's voice; she was startled from her annoyance. She couldn't think of a thing to say.

Nancy had been replaced by an ancient chain-smoking harridan and Teresa came to the uneasy realization that she was now the most nubile member of the Sailorman's crew. He watched her with a more-than-usually speculative eye, and contrived to rub his grubby bulk against her several times in the narrow aisle by the steam table; each time he adopted an expression of lascivious expectation that would have been ludicrous had it not been so frightening.

But at closing time he became embroiled in a near-brawl with a customer who'd found a sauteed roach in his chicken fingers. "You think I don't know what you're up to?" the Sailorman shouted. "You think you don't pay? You pay!"

The discussion became so acrimonious that the Sailorman never got around to molesting Teresa, and she slipped gratefully away.

Tomorrow would be her night off; she wouldn't have to deal with the Sailorman for two whole days. Maybe he'd hire another pretty young woman in the interim and be diverted. Otherwise she'd have to quit, tough job market or not.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

• • •

At the Chandlery, Bob set her to inventorying the stock in a rarely used storeroom and she spent the morning in dusty solitude. Occasionally she wondered about the white-haired woman and her mysterious lover Thomas. She felt an unaccustomed optimism; she told herself that her curiosity was a good sign. Perhaps it meant that her vocation was stirring after its long hibernation, perhaps she might revive her "career." She thought about attempting a short story, perhaps a small polemic on the dependent women who sailed around the world with their men...unhappy and always complaining, but never brave enough to leave their uncomfortable adventure.

She set her inventory sheet aside and considered the idea. Aside from the unusual setting, what would distinguish the story from the graduate student fiction that flooded the little magazines at the end of every semester? Women as willing victims, as whining appendages to men.

She felt her enthusiasm wane; she sighed and went back to counting turnbuckles.

A little later Linda came in on quiet feet and touched Teresa's shoulder, startling her so that she dropped her clipboard with a clatter.

"I'm sorry," Linda said, in her vague way.

"It's all right," Teresa said.

"Bob said I'd find you back here." Linda seemed quite uneasy, but her cheeks were a little flushed, her eyes were brighter, almost animated.

"Yes?"

"I told Thomas about you...about meeting you, I mean. He...we thought you might like to have dinner with us sometime. On the boat." She looked at Teresa anxiously.

Teresa found the invitation astonishing. Some of this might have shown in her face, because Linda evidently felt a need to explain further. "Thomas is a very good cook, actually." She looked away. "Thomas said you sounded very interesting."

This seemed entirely false to Teresa, who could not recall having said anything interesting to Linda. It occurred to her that perhaps she was receiving some sort of sexual invitation; Thomas sends the little woman ashore to fetch supplies, Thomas sends the little woman ashore to fetch a playmate.

"Well...." Teresa said, trying to find a polite way to refuse.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But Linda, apparently sensing her reluctance, looked stricken. "Please," she said. "It would be so nice to have a visitor. We almost never do."

Teresa softened; how many times had she been just as desperately lonely as Linda seemed to be now? "It sounds like fun. I've never dined on a yacht before. It'd be an experience."

Linda smiled a bit more vividly than Teresa would have thought she could. "That's great! Would you like to come tonight, for a late supper? I could pick you up in the dinghy after work." She seemed so eager that Teresa became uneasy.

"Actually," Teresa said. "I'm off tonight. Could we eat early? Before dark? I had plans for later." She didn't, of course, but the lie might rescue her if the mysterious Thomas was planning on dinner and deviance. Besides, she wanted to meet him in the sunlight, just to be sure he wasn't a vampire.

Linda seemed pleased, which didn't necessarily reassure Teresa — perhaps the white-haired woman wasn't as sexually adventurous as her lover.

After Linda left, Teresa felt a little silly. All this sexual paranoia...what did it mean? Maybe the Sailorman had some grasp of her situation after all, despite his grotesque turn of phrase.

What an awful idea, she thought, with a little shudder.

Bob let her off early so she could go back to the motel and get ready. She showered, then put on a long loose white skirt and an aqua blouse — appropriate dress, she hoped, for dinner and a dinghy ride.

Linda met her on the beach behind the Chandlery. "You look nice," Linda said, with such an air of satisfaction that Teresa became uncomfortable, her suspicions stimulated again.

She got her sandals wet helping Linda launch the dinghy, but the ride out to the boat was uneventful and silent. Linda seemed to need all her strength to keep them moving, though the breeze was light.

They approached the old ketch and for the first time Teresa could see the boat's name, painted in faded gilt across the wineglass stern. *Rosemary*, she was called. Thomas could have had the grace to rename the boat after his current girlfriend, Teresa thought disapprovingly. "Rosemary," she said. "Who was that?"

The dinghy bumped the topsides lightly and Linda held the rail. "Not 'who.' 'What.' The herb...you know?" She cleated the dinghy's line expertly.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I forget the exact quote; Thomas can tell you. It's something from Shakespeare, something about rosemary being for remembrance."

"Oh," said Teresa, somewhat chastened but not completely convinced. While Linda held the dinghy steady, she climbed aboard into an empty cockpit of varnished mahogany.

Still no Thomas. But on a little table by the wheel there was a silver tray; it held three frosted goblets and a plate of crackers.

"This is nice," Teresa said and to her surprise it was. Though the boat's mildewed old hull had shown a little peeling paint, whiskers of green moss at the waterline, and the occasional rust stain, the cockpit was beautifully maintained, the varnish mirror-bright, the cockpit cushions a soft blue, the old bronze wheel polished to a warm glow.

"Let's sit," said Linda. "Thomas will be up in a moment."

Teresa settled on the starboard seat and Linda handed her a goblet. The wine was pale and almost sweet. Nothing like it had ever been served at the Bugeyed Sailor. Teresa took a sip, then another, resisting the urge to gulp. Curiosity filled her.

Linda sat beside her. The white-haired woman seemed for the first time completely at ease, sipping her own wine and gazing off across the harbor. She wore her usual ragged cutoffs and a sleeveless silk blouse, blue-white against her dark tan. She made Teresa feel overdressed and dowdy, but not resentful. Linda seemed so defenseless. Teresa had seen a face like Linda's before. The memory surfaced: Teresa had met a blind man, years before, who had briefly courted her. Only in his own home did the uncertainty and tension leave him. Only in a place where every object conformed to his memory could he feel reasonably safe.

This train of thought crashed when Thomas emerged from the louvered doors of the main hatchway. Teresa's first reaction was open-mouthed amazement.

She had never seen a more beautiful man, though his beauty was quite unconventional. He climbed through the hatch with an almost unnatural grace and vaulted into the cockpit, landing so lightly that his bare feet made no sound. He nodded to Teresa and took the last goblet.

"Hello," he said, in a voice so soft that she was sure it reached only to her ears and no further. He had some sort of accent, unidentifiable.

"Hello," she replied, in a voice almost as soft; she was breathless, her

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lungs seemed to have forgotten their function.

Thomas had dark wavy hair shot with white streaks, a shaggy mane perfect in its artlessness. Thomas's eyes were a vivid blue-violet, the lashes so long and thick that he seemed to be wearing mascara, and the soft full mouth contributed further to the androgynous quality of his features. But this impression was countered by his skin, mahogany dark, which seemed at first glance quite old, or at least weathered, a membrane of age over the face and body of a much younger man. The skin stretched taut and burnished over the strong bones, but with a thousand fine wrinkles in the hollows.

She tried to guess his age; it was impossible. His hands were well-shaped and youthful. He wore faded jeans and an old cotton dress shirt without buttons, the sleeves hacked off at the elbows. His bare chest was striated with wiry muscle, his forearms corded like an oyster tonger's.

He seemed to feel no need for conversation; he gazed out across the harbor, smiling a faint smile. Teresa felt a hot piercing envy for Linda, and a sudden embarrassing hope that her sexual paranoia was well-founded, after all. She tried to maintain her equilibrium, she reminded herself that this was the man she had, with complete certainty, dismissed as a jerk. That idea now seemed ridiculous; she was actually ashamed to have thought it, despite the lack of any real evidence to the contrary. The world, after all, was full of beautiful jerks.

The silence grew less comfortable for Teresa, though her hosts showed no uneasiness. She cast about for something to say — something not too depressingly banal. "So...," she said. "Is this your first visit to Destin?"

Thomas fixed her with a neutral gaze. "Yes. The harbor is good, but the holding ground is poor." He delivered this remark without any discernible emotional coloration, and Teresa thought: this is a very odd person.

"I've heard that," she said. "Bob — the guy I work for at the Chandlery — Bob says the bottom is like thin soup. Whenever Destin gets brushed by a hurricane, he says it's like Keystone Cops out here. Boats dragging back and forth, lots of yelling."

Thomas's faint smile seemed like an artifact permanently affixed to his mouth; Teresa registered the odd fact that the smile seemed to cause no related lines in Thomas's face. "There are no safe harbors in a hurricane," Thomas said, without heat, in fact without any inflection that she could detect.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Really?"

But evidently Thomas felt no compulsion to explain his assertion. The silence resumed, until Linda said, slowly and dreamily. "That's because of the other boats, Thomas says. No matter how well your boat is anchored, someone else won't have been so careful, and his boat will carry yours away."

It seemed to Teresa that Linda was speaking of Thomas as if he were somewhere else, far away. "That makes sense, I guess," she said. "I guess you need to be the only boat in the harbor, if you want to be safe."

Perhaps it was her imagination, but his smile seemed slightly wider. "An apt observation," he said.

Linda's smile bore an eerie resemblance to Thomas's, though only for a moment, and Teresa shivered.

Thomas stood. "The air chills. We will go down to dinner." He held out his hand to Teresa; she took it. His touch was cool, perhaps from the wine goblet, his palm calloused hard as bone.

He helped her down the companionway ladder into the boat's main cabin, and again Teresa was pleasantly surprised. The cabin seemed much larger on the inside than she would have imagined. Varnished woodwork set off white bulkheads and full bookshelves. To either side was a settee upholstered in russet. Under a gleaming brass trawler lamp, a table had been unfolded from the forward bulkhead. A linen cloth was set with white china and polished silver. She smelled lamp oil and lemons and something savory.

"Sit," instructed Thomas, and directed her to the side of the table set with one plate.

He served the meal. The next day, Teresa would remember few of the details, since her attention was less on the meal than on the cook, but there was a salad of baby lettuces and satsuma sections, a clear soup with shreds of carrot and scallop arranged in artful swirls, pasta with a sauce of rock shrimp and mushrooms, a crusty bread that must have been freshly baked.

There was no conversation; Linda ate with an intimidating concentration and Thomas responded to Teresa's compliments with that constant smile and nothing more. Thomas ate little, seeming only to taste each course, and Teresa began to wonder if he might be ill, too.

No one asked Teresa about herself, so that she had no need to trot out her literary pretensions.

Occasionally the boat rocked slightly in the wake of some passing vessel,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a pleasant motion. It was a little warm in the cabin, and a light gilding of perspiration made Linda's face shine in the lamplight, though Thomas seemed unaffected.

Dinner finished with a pale sorbet, a sweet fruity flavor Teresa couldn't quite identify. "Guava," Linda said.

Afterwards, Thomas cleared away the dishes and served coffee in small delicate cups. "I've never had a meal like that," Teresa said. She looked at Linda with fresh eyes. Perhaps the white-haired woman was not so severely exploited as she had feared. Perhaps they just had a different division of labors than most sailing couples.

Thomas set a bottle of brandy and three snifters on the table, and Teresa noticed that the portholes had grown dark. Night had come suddenly, and again she felt a bit of apprehension. For all his beauty and culinary talent, Thomas was a very strange man, and Linda a strange woman. Still she felt a curious sense of abandon; whatever happened, it would surely be interesting. The direction of her thoughts embarrassed her. She felt a flush rising in her cheeks, she found it impossible to look directly at her hosts for a moment.

Thomas poured brandy generously. "Now, music," he said, and opened a panel, behind which Teresa could see the gleam of expensive-looking stereo components. Sound filled the cabin, some delicate arrangement of strings and woodwinds Teresa didn't recognize. She leaned back against the settee cushions, holding her brandy under her nose so that the fumes rose into her head. Closing her eyes, she drifted into a fantasy: that the glossy wood interior of the ketch was the heart of some great complicated musical instrument and that she waited at its center while it played.

Perhaps she fell asleep, because when next she opened her eyes Linda was taking the empty brandy snifter from her cramped hand and Thomas was gone. "It's very late," Linda whispered. "Stay with us."

Teresa felt a strange mixture of apprehension and anticipation...and then disappointment, as Linda continued. "We sleep in the aft cabin, but there's a single bunk in the forepeak, quite comfortable. I've made it up with fresh sheets."

"Well...."

"Please," Linda said earnestly. "I wouldn't want to take you ashore now, in the dark. After the restaurants close, the transients come out of their hiding places and walk the shoreline; did you know? I'm afraid of them; some

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of them seem dangerous."

"I don't want to impose," Teresa said.

"No, no," Linda said. "We want you."

But not in your bed, Teresa thought sadly.

She let Linda show her to the guest cabin, which was small but pleasant. An overhead hatch let in the cool night air and a candle lantern threw a low dappled light on the woodwork.

"Sleep well," Linda said. Teresa watched her pass back through the main cabin, pausing to blow out the trawler lamp. Moonlight shone through the skylight; the white-haired woman slid a louvered door aside and went into a deeper darkness.

The bunk was comfortable and despite her expectations Teresa fell asleep quickly.

She woke later, from some vague, possibly lustful dream, a little overheated. She lay for a few minutes before she became aware of the sounds. They were very soft: a moan of pleasure, a gasp, almost a sob. Teresa raised herself on one elbow, turning her head, the better to hear. The sounds grew a tiny bit louder, and Teresa remembered her dream of several nights past. She noticed that the boat was absolutely still; no love waves. Her imagination attempted to picture a kind of lovemaking that wouldn't rock the boat, and at once a vivid possibility occurred to her. She noticed that her throat was dry; she had apparently been panting. Her hand slipped between her legs; then she resolutely pulled it up and held it with the other, gripping it so tightly that her hands ached.

She wasn't sure why she couldn't allow herself even that simple pleasure. Stupidity, perhaps.

Eventually the sounds faded into silence and she fell asleep again.

WHEN SHE woke, it was to the sensation that something was moving across her face. Her eyes opened to a painful glare. It took a moment for her vision to clear and then she was startled to see Thomas in the tiny cabin beside her, doing something to a curtain. She gasped and he turned toward her.

"I am too late," he said. "The tinkerbelle has already disturbed you."

"What?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He moved the curtain aside briefly, to reveal the sun shining brightly through. "The tinkerbelle. So sailors call the sunlight that comes through an uncovered port. The boat's movement causes the light to dance about; it seems always to find the faces of sleeping off-watch crew."

"I see," she said, and looking down at herself she also saw that the sheets had become disarranged, so that she was more than half-naked. She hastily covered her legs but Thomas seemed not to notice.

"I serve breakfast in the cockpit," he said, and left.

Her disappointment annoyed her. What had she expected? That Thomas would crawl into her narrow bunk and set to entertaining her? Ridiculous. Besides, even if Teresa were irresistibly desirable — a hilarious thought — his night of revelry had probably exhausted his erotic energies.

She dressed and brushed her hair in a mood of sour self-criticism.

A plate of hot cinnamon rolls waited on the cockpit table.

"There is orange juice and coffee," Thomas said in his curious neutral voice, as earnest as a cruise-ship steward.

She took a roll and a glass of orange juice, which seemed freshly squeezed. "Thank you," she said. "Where's Linda?"

"Indisposed."

"Oh no. What's wrong? Can I help?"

He looked at her with those beautiful eyes. She could not describe his expression as cold, or empty — it was simply an expression new to her and thus unclassifiable. "No, you cannot help. Not yet."

This seemed so strange a pronouncement that she was a little afraid. She nibbled at her roll and sipped her juice. She finally noticed how lovely the harbor was, in the glassy calm of morning.

"Well," she said, when she had finished. "I'd better go; today I work at the Chandlery."

"Take the dinghy."

"But...how will you get it back?"

He made a gesture of dismissal. "Do not be concerned. Perhaps one of us will swim ashore. Perhaps you will return it when next you visit."

"I'm not sure you'd want to swim in the harbor," she said with a little shudder of distaste. "And I have to work at the Bugeyed Sailor tonight."

He shrugged, clearly uninterested.

As Thomas was helping her to board the dinghy, she remembered her

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

manners and said, "Thank you for a very pleasant experience. I really enjoyed it."

"And do you remember it well?" he asked, which struck her as a very odd question.

"As well as I remember anything," she said.

This answer seemed to please him; at least his faint smile seemed stronger.

The restaurant was unusually busy, which served to keep the Sailorman away for a while, but toward closing, business flagged.

A young couple full of romantic sighs lingered on the deck, holding hands and gazing deeply into each other eyes. She didn't hurry them; she sensed a big tip. She waited in the farthest corner of the deck and looked out at the *Rosemary*, which during the evening seemed to have shifted her anchorage. The old white ketch floated quite near, perhaps only a hundred feet off. The portholes and skylight were dark; the boat exuded an air of emptiness and disuse. Teresa fell into a mood of vague self-pity.

The tip wasn't that big, she saw with some annoyance. She didn't realize how late it had become until the lights inside went out. The Sailorman came bustling out, a gleam in his bulging eyes. Her heart sank; she wondered if she were alone with him. Had the other help already gone home?

"You gotta bust the table yourself, honey," he said happily. "Busboy took off. But just stack on the drainboard. I don't make you wash. I'm good to you, right?"

She slid away from him along the deck's rickety railing, but almost immediately saw that she had erred by moving into the corner. There the Sailorman trapped her. He squeezed her breasts painfully; his belly bent her backward over the rail. He fumbled with his pants, then he pushed his hand up the leg of her culottes and dug his dirty fingers into her. In his enthusiasm, he ripped open the inseam of her culottes. "Now you got a chance to be good to me," he said. "I'm a big tipper, too."

If she screamed, would it do any good? Or would he just break her neck and throw her into the harbor with the other garbage? If the Sailorman killed her, who would know what had happened?

A sour cheesy stink assaulted her nostrils, even worse than the Sailorman's ordinary body odor, worse than his dead-fish breath. Disgust overcame fear,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and she tried to dig her fingernails into his face. But they were too short to do any real damage and he chortled tolerantly.

She was almost ready to give up, when something changed. The Sailorman sagged against her, his weight crushing the breath out of her. His fingers ceased their assault.

A long moment passed, and Teresa noticed that he'd stopped breathing. Her panic, which had briefly subsided, instantly returned. She pushed at him, but he was immovable. Would she be found asphyxiated under the Sailorman's gross corpse, two bodies hanging over the corner of the railing, an amazing spectacle for the charter boats on their way out to the Gulf? What a dreadful thought. She writhed, trying to get away.

The Sailorman drew a long shuddering breath and pushed away from her. His eyes had gone dull, his body had slumped, his flaccid penis hung from the fly of his Popeye costume. "Excuse me," he said in a strange flat voice. "I just remembered something." He turned and shambled away, staggering a little, and disappeared into the restaurant.

She just stood there for a while, until her breath came back. She leaned on the railing, thinking she might throw up, and then she saw that Thomas was watching from Rosemary's deck.

He stood motionless, a silhouette against the lights across the harbor. She had a bizarre impulse to wave, followed by a sudden irrational certainty that Thomas had done something to stop the Sailorman. This was so strange a thought that it superseded gratitude. Suddenly she transferred the fury she'd felt for the Sailorman to the man on the boat. Angry questions filled her. What was he? And whatever he had done to the Sailorman, why hadn't he done worse? Should she go to the police? Why should they believe her version of the night's events? Would Thomas be a witness?

It was hard to imagine that he would; she remembered Linda saying, "Thomas almost never leaves the boat."

She paused to pin her culottes together, then hurried down the road to the Shipshape Chandlery, behind which the dinghy was still beached.

The night was breezy and dark, the moon obscured by low clouds. The harbor was disturbed by a fish-scale chop and the idea of rowing the dinghy out to the ketch was unappealing. Also the boat seemed to have moved away from the shoreline again; it would be a long pull. But she still felt shaky with

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

anger, with the need to do something, so she pushed off and began splashing her way across the water.

The ketch remained dark when she reached it, and Thomas was gone from the cockpit. She tied the dinghy's line to the cleat. Wasn't there some sort of etiquette involved in boarding a boat? One wasn't supposed to just jump on, she thought, and then was annoyed with herself that she could still be concerned about such a trivial matter, at such a time. Still, she rapped on the deck with her knuckles, as though knocking on a door. The sound was muffled by the thickness of the teak decking, but she was sure those within could hear it.

She waited, but after a while it became clear there would be no response. She began to feel a bit foolish. The outraged energy which had driven her across the dark harbor was fading, and she wished she had just gone back to her room, where she could wash the Sailorman's stink off her and where the bottle of Nembutal waited patiently.

She looked back over her shoulder, toward the dark shoreline from which she had come, and saw two men standing there, lit faintly by the glow of their cigarettes. Were these the bums Linda had warned her against? The idea of rowing back to the beach lost all of its appeal, and she climbed aboard *Rosemary*, making a clatter.

The main hatch doors were hooked back, showing a trapezoid of blackness. When she looked in, she saw, dimly, Thomas gazing back at her.

"I want to talk to you," she said.

He nodded and came up the companionway ladder.

She backed away, sat down on a dew-soaked cushion. "What did you do? To the Sailorman?"

He stood beside the wheel, looking off across the harbor. "You make a large assumption, Teresa."

But there was no denial in his voice, and she began to feel more sure of herself. "Tell me the truth," she said.

"What did he say?"

This question took her aback. "Does it matter? He said he remembered something...an excuse, I suppose."

"What if it were not an excuse?"

She thought about that. She thought about the name of the boat, and the quote from Shakespeare: *Rosemary, that's for remembrance.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"What did he remember?" she asked.

The moon broke through the clouds, so that his eyes glittered strangely. "An unpleasant man," Thomas said. "But not a detached one. At least this much can be said of him: he gets his money's worth from his experiences. He is not guilty of thinking too much."

"What are you talking about?" she asked, bewildered.

"The Sailorman was remembering a day long ago, when he went fishing off a dock in Tarpon Springs on a day he should have been in school. He paid no attention to his fishing; he had just been rejected by a girl named Dorothy and he was planning, in cool blood, a revenge."

The conversation had become bizarre. She waited, hoping he would explain.

Thomas sat down beside her, and it occurred to her that he seemed so odd partly because he used none of the ordinary range of non-verbal expression. He did not shrug, or sigh, or make any other sort of gesture. He still wore the same faint smile.

"I read many books," he said.

"Is that so?"

"Yes. I have a good library aboard — the classics and various serious modern writers. And then, we trade paperbacks with other cruisers, so I get to read a good deal of ephemera as well." He said this with no air of judgment. "Recently I read a little anthology of science fiction stories. They were uneven in quality; most were forgettable." He spoke the last word very softly. "There was one that at least had an interesting line. The protagonist is in space, looking out at a big orbital billboard. It advertises a chemical memory stimulant. The billboard's message is: 'Now you too can remember those important things you were too stupid to notice when they happened.'"

"What?"

"Most people do not, you know. They do not notice many of the important things. Though it is not stupidity, that is not the source of their failure. You are not a stupid person, Teresa."

"What does this have to do with the Sailorman?" She grew annoyed by what she took to be a deliberate mocking obscurity.

Thomas looked at her and though his expression never altered she had a sudden strong sense of expectation. "I am something like that memory-stimulating product."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I don't understand." But she was beginning to understand; she remembered Linda, in the sandwich shop, telling her that Thomas had shown her that her life had not been empty, after all. "What are you?"

"Do you mean: am I a visitor from another planet? A mutant? Some mythic creature, a vampire drinking the blood of unnoticed experience?" Though his language had become extravagant, his voice never changed. "I am an oyster. Or, better, a barnacle. Anchored to my hull, my good *Rosemary*, I extend myself gingerly into the stream of life, and filter from it my sustenance. And there you have it."

She had a strong impression that he had made this speech many times before, that it was reduced to its essentials, that he was making as clear a statement about himself as he could. "You...eat experience? People's memories?"

"No. The truth is more subtle. What I 'eat' is the difference between the richness of my victims' lives and the poor pale perceptions they own. I notice what they did not, and this awareness feeds me."

"'Victims?' Why do you call them victims?"

"Unfortunately, the retrieval of lost memory is a destructive process. My victims remember with me, so at least they regain their lost lives, but eventually, when those lives are mined out, they die. I would like to be a symbiote, but I am a parasite. I only touched the Sailorman. He will be a little dazed for a day or two; his employees will enjoy it while it lasts. When we arrived here, I killed a heron — thin food, but necessary. My hunger was great, and I dared not take any more from Linda just then."

"Why didn't you go ashore? Surely you could have found all the victims you needed there."

"Unfortunately, I am unable to survive in a crowd. It would be like drowning in soup, for me. A better metaphor: like having a high pressure soup hose forced down my throat. I cannot go ashore, except in deserted places. When the big charter boats pass us, I cannot breathe."

If Thomas was a monster, he was a remarkably forthcoming one. Still...she imagined going to the police with her story: *yes, the would-be rapist was deterred by a memory vampire.* No wonder Thomas could speak so freely.

"How is Linda?" she asked, seeking a diversion, feeling an unreasonable embarrassment that she hadn't thought to ask before.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"She is dying."

Teresa tried to summon a shock she did not really feel. Her shame deepened, as well as her confusion. "But...why's she here? Why isn't she in the hospital?"

Thomas shook his beautiful head. "Would you like to see her?"

She followed him to the companionway. From the cabin he said, "I will make a light." An oil lamp flared gold; he reached up a hand to help her. In the lamp's light his eyes seemed without depth, the eyes of an animal.

In the aft cabin, Linda lay on a wide transverse bunk, propped up in a nest of pillows. She was pale, as though her tan had faded overnight. She looked very young. Her eyes were open, staring at the overhead, and at first Teresa thought she was already dead. At her gasp of dismay, Linda's eyes moved slightly.

Thomas slid the compartment door shut, leaving Teresa alone with the white-haired woman.

"Teresa?" Linda's voice was as soft as a breath. "Are you here?"

"Yes." Teresa said, and sat on the edge of the bunk.

"Good. I thought you would come. I told Thomas you would."

Teresa studied the face; it wasn't the face of a sufferer. "Is it true? That he's eaten your life?"

A spectral smile touched the pale lips. "Dramatic. I guessed you were a writer. I could see the signs. No...Thomas hasn't devoured me."

"But you're...." Teresa wanted to say: *You're dying*; instead she said, "You're so ill."

"Thomas doesn't always explain well. Listen. He gave me my life, he let me take from it all the joy and sorrow it held. I never *noticed*, when I was actually living my life."

"Your life isn't over. You're still young."

Linda smiled with slightly more vitality. "Thomas isn't a wasting disease, Teresa. He's very good for the body. I'm fifty-seven years old; I have three grown children and two grandchildren. If you stay with him, you'll look like a young girl, at the end."

Stay with him?

Linda struggled to look at Teresa directly. "No, no. Don't be afraid. You'll stay only if you choose it. Thomas is gentle, less dangerous than the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

oyster he considers himself to be."

"Why would you think I'd stay? Do you think I want to die?" The idea was grotesque; she had forgotten about the bottle of Nembutal.

Linda sighed. "Maybe I'm wrong about you. Maybe you're not like me. Maybe you've been able, a time or two, to live within the moment. Maybe you haven't spent all your life grieving for the past, fearing the future. If you think you can really *live* the rest of your life, then that's fine."

A slow weary tide of sadness began to rise in Teresa's heart.

"But let Thomas show you what he does," Linda said. "If you want to leave after that, I wish you well. Though I fear for poor Thomas."

"Poor Thomas?"

"Yes." Linda's voice was very faint now. "He lives only through us. All his life is borrowed." Her body trembled beneath the quilt. "Leave me, now. I've been pretty lucid for a woman in my condition, but it won't last. If you decide to stay, send him to me. I want to finish."

WHEN SHE reached the deck, Thomas had gone forward, to sit crosslegged with his back against the mainmast. The moonlight was brighter now, and he seemed no more intimidating than any other very handsome man. Perhaps Linda was just a lunatic, in the last stages of some mania-inducing disease?

But Thomas shared her delusion, or so it seemed.

Teresa went up the sidedeck and leaned against the lifelines. How strange, she thought. Here she was with a man who believed himself to be some sort of soul-eating life-draining monster. And for some reason Teresa wasn't swimming for the shore. It wasn't like any horror movie she'd ever seen. "Linda said we should be sorry for you. Poor Thomas, she said."

An ordinary human might have shrugged, but of course Thomas did not. "I do not understand her concern. I am as I am."

"Right. Well, listen, this has been interesting, but I'd better go. Got to look for a new job tomorrow; I'll be a busy girl. Could you take me ashore? You could drop me at the sandspit. Nobody lives there, yet."

"You are humoring me," said Thomas. "It is charming, but unnecessary. You may take the dinghy. Or, if you wish, I will show you what I am."

She retreated a step, but he made no threatening movement. "I don't

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

think so," she said. "I mean, it's a terrific offer and all...I could relive my crappy life and then die, it sounds like great fun, really, but...."

He looked away, out across the harbor toward the darkened sandspit that divided the harbor from the pass into the Gulf. "Then return to your room and your bottle of stale Nembutal." His faint smile never wavered.

Suddenly, she believed, and she wasn't even very curious about the source of his knowledge. "Is it...is it like some sort of super drug? One taste and I'm hooked for life?"

"For death, do you mean? In a way. Life is the most completely addictive drug. Those who are addicts can never get enough. They feel, all the time, as you will feel if you remember your life through me."

"And I can't change? I can't learn to feel as they do?"

"I don't know," he said. "Sometimes people do change. My impression is that you will not."

His words, spoken in that soft formal voice, seemed inevitable, and they finished the erosion of her will. Were Thomas suddenly to sprout long fangs and lunge at her throat, she thought, she wouldn't even attempt to stop him.

"Why did you help me? With the Sailorman," she asked, but without any real curiosity.

"You did not deserve to own so ugly a memory."

A time passed, and the breeze died.

"Show me," she said.

Thomas glanced up. "See," he said, pointing. "The moon is about to go behind a cloud."

She looked.

The blue Gulf was a beautiful soft dream, the first time she saw it. She parked her old car along a stretch of undeveloped beach, and felt the sun soak through the windows, warming her. There was an energizing tang to the air, she'd never filled her lungs with such delicious stuff before.

She got out and looked out across the ocean, marveling at the subtle gradation of hues, from the pale aquamarine in the shallows to the dense metallic purple at the horizon. A gentle onshore breeze carried a faint scent of seaweed and fish, an exotic smell, not at all unpleasant, with an even fainter undertone of coconut oil. The beach was almost deserted, in comparison to other beaches she had known — only a few sunbathers were scattered over

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the brilliant white sand.

She felt a complex mixture of hope and anxiety, but the emotions were just a buzzing background to the lovely sensations of the moment. She'd left Atlanta in a frenzy of anger and disappointment, driven all night, thinking dark thoughts. All forgotten, at least for now.

She opened the trunk and got a cream soda from the ice chest. She sat on the hood, looking out over the Gulf, sipping the soda. She rolled the taste of it on her tongue — vanilla was such a round perfect flavor.

The sun felt so good. Later it might be too hot for comfort, but now, in mid-morning, it was perfect. She wanted to take off her blouse and let the sun touch her breasts, like a lover's warm breath.

Happiness surged through her, but it was a feeling that lived far away from her ordinary thoughts and emotions. She might have thought it very strange, were she not so full of delight.

By the time the sun rose, they were far out in the Gulf, the Destin condominiums sinking below the edge of the sea. Thomas showed her how to steer the course, how to watch the set of the sails, and then went below.

An hour later he came on deck with Linda's body wrapped in a sheet and weighted with rusty chain.

He gave her to the water without ceremony.

"What now?" Teresa asked.

"We will go south, to an island where no one lives, and the tidal range is large enough to careen *Rosemary*. She needs new bottom paint."

He took the wheel, and Teresa went to sit in the corner of the cockpit, where there was a little shelter from the wind.

She could not say she was happy, but at least she felt no pain. She could not say she had hopes, but at least she had expectations.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Lynn Coulter is a freelance writer for The Atlanta Journal-Constitution. *She has sold short fiction to* First for Women, Marion Zimmer Bradley's Fantasy Magazine, *and several literary magazines.*

"Granny Woman" marks her first appearance in F&SF. *About the story, she writes, "The early settlers of the Appalachian mountains, with their rich traditions of folklore and healing, inspired this story. My grandmother is a descendent of those Scotch-Irish settlers, and I've heard the rhythms of their speech in her voice all my life. Years ago she recounted an incident to me that happened when she was a girl. A neighboring farmer's only mule had been struck and killed by lightning in an open field. The loss of that work animal must have been devastating for a poor farm family. The Appalachian mountains are steeped in tales of the powers of nature and powers of the supernatural, and my imagination took over from there."*

Granny Woman

By Lynn Coulter

I AM WHITE-HAIRED NOW, and when I run a comb across my head every morning some of my sparse hairs catch in the teeth. When a woman grows old, her hair thins out like that, like a life grows thin and stretched out, too, reaching the end of usefulness. It is a sign to us that we are to cast aside all vanities before we die. But God knows I am not ready yet, for I have much to account for. He cannot always forgive His children till they have born the weight of their sins. It has been so since Adam and the first woman, and so it must be with me.

It began with lightning. I hadn't been born that August morning when Daddy hitched his mules, Jenny and Jim, to plow the cornfield he share-cropped for old Odum. He only stopped to eat the hoecake Mama brought him for his midday meal. Then she, who did not know yet she was carrying me, took the reins while he sat down to rest under a hickory nut tree.

It had been a thundery-like day, she told me later, hot air and still, sky

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

low and gray. Across the field bees droned in a honeysuckle thicket, lulling Daddy down to sleep after he'd ate. So Mama, thinking to let him rest, kept on plowing, gee-hawing to Jenny and Jim and slapping the reins on their rumps every now and then, stinging the dust out of their coats.

Storm came a-rumbling over the purple mountains. She saw the clouds grow dark as coal and roll down to the valley floor. She wrapped them reins tighter around her fists. It wasn't far to go and she determined that that field would be plowed.

Daddy drowsed as thunder rumbled in the air. The hairs on Mama's arms prickled up, but she dug her boot heels into the rocks and dirt of these Appalachian hills and leaned into the plow. Rain fell, cold, like needles. She seen lightning crack over by Odum's place. One more row, she thought, and the field would be done. Sky darkened then like night all over. 'Fore long she was steering by flashes of lightning. One jagged streak hit across from her, and smoke curled out of a brambly patch into the rain. She got scared then, slung that harness aside and ran underneath the hickory nut tree, shaking Daddy's shoulder and hollering, come on, let's us go, and them poor mules just standing out there in the middle of that field braying and stomping their hooves for her to come get them, and about that time the lightning hit with a crack like almighty God himself had spat onto this miserable earth. It didn't hit that tree, though, like true lightning ought to. No sir, it hit them poor mules, Jenny and Jim, struck them both dead to the ground. Killed both my Daddy's mules in one blow.

There was nothing nobody could do. Mama and Daddy knelt under that tree, holding onto one another, wet leaves plastering onto their backs and hickory nuts shaking down in still-green shells till the storm passed. Then they crept out from under those branches dripping rain and felt of the bodies of Jenny and Jim. Burnt hair-smell tinged the air. They rubbed those mules' stiff ears, Daddy pumped their sides till his arms ached trying to squeeze breath back in their lungs. The mules' noses were still warm, but the life wasn't in them.

I was born next spring, and as I grew I learned what the lightning had done that day. What it took away, the life-spirit it took out of them mules Jenny and Jim, it gave me to give away again. The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away.

• • •

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I was christened Elorie Kay when the Baptist preacher came round on the circuit in 1881. I was eldest of eight, and when the little 'uns commenced to call me "Lokie" it stuck to me all my days. I lived with my Mama and Daddy and cared for them till they passed. After they were gone, I swapped butter for chores or sewed for town ladies. Then I put my hand to herbs, tansy-root to boil for headache-tea, steeped laurel leaves for a compress when bleeding won't stop. I learned without learning, really. Just knew. Camomile for stomach ailment, orris root on a pillow to make a girl dream of a man to marry. And more. Folks heard about me, how sometimes I helped womenfolk get babies. It was the power to give life, what the lightning had given me that day. My reputation spread, and I became a granny woman.

It was the first hoar-frost morning of fall, that day I saw her coming up my path. Her bucket full of red-jacket taters swung hard against her legs. Folks know I am fond of new taters now that I have got too old to hoe my own.

Her head was bent low against the wind that whistles down my mountain, heavy red curls streaming over her shoulders. I knew her to be Gurlie Kennedy, who had married a year before. She had not married young, as is the custom; I heard tell that her Pa near despaired of wedding her away. She was not ugly but her face was flat and plain. She was big-boned and awkward, too, with long arms that stuck out of the sleeves of every dress her Mama sewed, and calloused hands at the end of them long arms. She clumped up my path in a man's brown brogan shoes, for her feet was too wide to wear a woman's slipper. But for all of this, she was strong. Her broad shoulders didn't hunch under the weight of that bucket.

I welcomed her to my fire. She shrugged off her crocheted shawl like it was itching her back.

"Granny Lokie, I am in need of your service."

"Why, child, what could you need of me?" I couldn't imagine this big healthy gal needing me to help get a baby.

"You know I'm married to Guy Howard." Now this did surprise me; I had not known who she wed and they seemed an unlikely match. Guy Howard was one of the fairest men in the valley and many a girl had set her cap for him. He helped at his daddy's piece goods store, which would be his one day. He had even given me, old woman that I am, a feeling like fingers raked down my spine, with them black eyes of his.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Guy Howard wants a baby, Granny." She sat down on the floor beside my fire and wrapped her big hands around the china teacup I gave her. "I can't seem to get one."

I took up a lit twig from the fire and touched it to my pipe. "Y'all ain't tried long enough yet, Gurlie. Give it a while, come back and see me." I told her this, for it was true.

"He don't want to wait. His ma and pa is pushing at him for he's almost thirty-year-old." She stood up to face the fire and I saw her dress was patched in the back. Shameful, I thought, the wife of a piece-goods merchant had no cloth for a decent gown.

"How old are you, Gurlie?"

"Nineteen." Then she rubbed her eyes with her knuckles and stared down at the floor. Her brown shoes stuck out from under her skirt. "I ain't a pretty woman, Granny. I'm afraid he'll leave me if I don't get a baby."

Awkward-like, she knelt down and laid her head in my lap, making out like she was sobbing. I rubbed her knotted curls and then shook my apron to shoo her off. "I'll help you, Gurlie," said I, "though it's against my judgment. But you drink my potion ever time he comes to you. It's helped women before."

She smiled up at me then, and I saw that her brown eyes was dry of tears. Dry as the cornstalks burned by frost in the garden outside my cabin door.

I SAW HER a time or two after that, for she came back for more potion, and she paid me with crops from her daddy's land or a remnant of calico from Guy Howard's store. Then I did not hear from her again. For a while I wondered what became of her, if she'd got her baby or if Guy Howard had let it go. And finally I forgot about her. It was almost two years gone by before I heard of her again.

I had walked to town that day for flour and coffee and spied her through a store window across the street, patting a baby swaddled in a ragged piece of flannel up against her shoulder. I asked the clerk measuring out my flour into a cloth bag about her, and she allowed yes, that was Gurlie Howard, and yes, she had finally got her baby. In the telling of this she spilt a handful of flour on the wood floor but then scuffed it across the planking with her foot. "You won't have to pay for that," she said to me.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It struck me, how she moved her big foot and how she spoke. Her hair, wound in a bun on top of her head, sprung out in wiry red strands from a nest of hairpins she'd stuck there. She looked at me and spoke what I was thinking. "She's my sister," she said. "I'm Lute Kennedy, the youngest."

"Well," I said, "I'm Granny Lokie. I helped your sister get her baby." And I said this with satisfaction and pride.

She turned away from me and twisted a string around the neck of my flour bag. "Here," she said, thrusting the bag at me. "Don't pay me for it."

I walked home that afternoon like a fool, full of myself, vain that one such as me could sow life into a barren girl. Sitting in the rocking chair on my porch that evening I watched the sun hide behind the mountains, staining the fields all around with red. I napped till my chin bobbed against my chest. Then I snapped awake, feeling like you do when you're groping your way through a dark place and know just by knowing that something's in front of you.

It was Guy Howard standing on my path. I knew it was him, and yet he looked sick, pale-faced and eyes yellow where the whites should be.

"So you're the granny," he said. He stood there for a while, and then he climbed onto my porch, towering over me, breathing hard as if he'd run all the way up the hillside. "Witch woman."

I gripped the arms of my rocker and raised up. I thought I was not afraid of any man. "What brings you here, Guy?" My tongue and brains were still thick from sleep.

"I heard you was in town today," said he, "buying goods. Gossip said you was behind it."

I shook my head. "What ails you?"

He stepped so close to me I could smell moonshine from his mouth. Over the ridge the light faded, leaving his face as dark as shadows. "You give Gurlie that black medicine."

I couldn't reason out what he meant. "To get a baby with you, is all."

He grabbed me by the front of my dress with one fist and shook me like a dog will shake a dead rabbit. "Made me a laughing stock, you hear?" he shouted. Then he threw me back into my rocking chair and sobbed. "Got me an idiot, not fit to live nor kill." He stood there crying, his shoulders shaking under his black coat. Then he turned and staggered down the porch steps. I heard him stumbling through the brambles, and I sat there shivering till the moon rose and the crickets dared to sing.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I did not sleep that night nor many after that. And when I had called up my courage, I walked to town before dawn one day and watched until I saw Guy Howard open his store. Then I tore out to find Gurlie.

I found her outside their cabin, clipping wet clothes to a line hung between two skinny saplings. Something made a gurgling sound under a tree nearby. I spied a split-oak basket, and that dirty blanket in it must be the baby, covered up.

I called to her as she wrung out a shirt and flapped it in the air. "Gurlie?"

She swung around like she was scared.

"It's just me, Granny Lokie. I come to see your young'un."

She threw the wet clothes down and run to the young'un. She dropped to her knees beside the basket and picked up the baby, holding it close and rubbing its hair. The blanket slipped down and I saw its back was twisted a little, a shape like a garter snake will make in the sun if you rake over the rock it's sleeping under. "Let me see," I whispered.

She never said a word, just looked like daring me to touch. But then she lifted it off her shoulder and cradled it in her arms. It had curly red hair, same as her. But its eyes were roving, unsettled on her face, or mine, or anything. It rolled its black eyes, Guy Howard's eyes, toward the sky and trees above, rolled them like it was lost in that sky.

"How come this to happen, Granny?" she cried at me. "Your potion done this. Guy Howard is like to kill me for this!"

So it was a girl. Oh, my heart like to have broke, and I knelt down beside her. "Gurlie, this ain't never happened to no one I helped before, I swear it."

She moaned and clenched her bundle to her chest and rocked back and forth on her knees, not looking up and never speaking again. I left her there, the wet shirts and pants flapping on the clothesline in the wind, gray clouds swarming in the east.

I feared to see her any more. Once or twice I saw her sister Lute when I went to town, but I bought off of anybody else I could to stay out of her store. I knew they blamed me.

Folks talked hard about it. Word came to me that Guy Howard beat Gurlie and was drinking so bad his Daddy had threatened to cut him out of that piece goods store. And still I thought, I'd do more harm than good to see them again.

Fall came; persimmons glowed red in the woods. Under November's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

moon I dug herbs before the first hard freeze. Nights I sat before my fireplace, scrubbing dirt off roots and scraping the mealy flesh for potions I'd use for the sickness winter would bring. Sometimes my hand shook and I sliced my thumb, wondering, was it a spoiled root I had picked for her? The wrong herb, steeped too long or simmered too slow? What had I done to bring this misery on?

It snowed hard on the path to my cabin that winter, and nobody trod upon it to break the brittle crust. Nobody brought their babies to me to treat for croup, nobody came for a poultice for an aching limb or fever. And so I suspected nothing when I opened my door to a knock one night and found Lute there.

"You got to help her," Lute said. I closed the door to the cold, but she just stood, not shedding her coat or scarf. "Him and his daddy fought today about the store. Gurlie begged me to stay with her, she's so scared of him."

I felt bile rise in my throat. "What can I do?"

She shook my arm. "Tell him the baby ain't Gurlie's fault. You got to help her!"

And what could I do? My heart was sore afraid I had done this. I did not believe it was His will. It was my meddling, all mine.

So I ran behind her, quick as my old legs could carry me, back to Gurlie's cabin. Its door stood ajar. Inside a lantern threw a yellow gleam on a table with cups and pots knocked askew. Something dark dripped from table to floor.

Me and Lute hung onto the door frame, taking it all in. It was quiet as the tomb inside except for the baby's crying. Guy Howard was gone. Gurlie lay on the floor, stretched out on her stomach. Crawling along the floor, the baby girl reached out to twine her fingers in her mama's knotty red hair and laughed.

We rolled Gurlie over. One button on her shirtwaist had broken in half and the sharp edge had gouged her in the hollow of her throat. A drop of brown blood had dried there. I listened for her breath. Then I found a quilt on a pallet and laid it over her from brow to knees. Lute dropped across her sister's chest, screaming and crying. I was so stricken I couldn't speak. At last I collected my wits enough to take the baby against my shoulder to warm her.

I don't know how long we sat there beside Gurlie. Sometime before daylight he came back in. Lute lay quiet now over Gurlie's body, but she

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

roused up when she spied him.

"Murderer!" she screamed.

"Get outta my house, witch," he hissed at me. He looked past Lute like she wasn't even there. Striding into the room, he yanked the blanket away from the baby's face, the baby asleep now in my arms.

"Leave us be, Guy," I said, my voice afraid and quivering. I had stayed beside Gurlie all night, and my legs were stiff and aching. I couldn't shake the sleep out of my limbs fast enough to rise, and I hugged the baby close as I cowered beside Gurlie. "We'll see about this baby. Let us be."

"I'll kill you," he said to me, but his voice was calm and even now. He towered over us, Lute and me and the baby, crouched beside Gurlie on the cabin floor.

The baby woke up and looked at him with her rolling black eyes, and her eyes circled round and round the roof of the cabin. A chill ran down my back and I wondered, does she see her mama's ghost above us?

Guy lunged down at me, as if to rip that baby out of my arms, but Lute cried out like a wolf and threw her weight against his outstretched arms. He turned to fling her off, but in the motion he lost his balance. He stumbled over Gurlie's still body and fell across her, Lute carried down, too, and falling over on top of him, clawing and scratching and screaming what he had done.

I scrambled aside as they fought, managed to roll myself and the baby away from them and stagger to my feet. Without a backward look, I ran to the cabin door, flung it open and ran through the woods to my cabin with the baby in my arms, Lute's cries behind my back.

With shaking hands I ran inside and bolted my door. I reached up over the fireplace and took down my shotgun. If he came for us tonight, I would be ready.

But he did not come. Not that night, and not that next morning. I sat like a rock, not moving except to see about the baby, asleep in my bed. And by afternoon I knew what I must do.

I dumped my potions out of my carpet bag and folded up my blankets and clothes. I collected all the money I had, and packed up food and the milk my cow had given the day before. And when all was done, I hitched the horse to my buggy and laid the baby on the boards between my feet, covering her with a blanket against the wind. I whipped the reins across the horse's rump and we sped off, the buggy rocking hard, toward the valley. Overhead, clouds were

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gathering. The air was dead-still, like the eye of a storm. This was my chance, I reckoned, to escape. He would not know old Odum's place lay in the valley, empty and dark, forgotten. But I knew. I knew, too, the storm would sweep over us once the eye had passed.

It has been almost a year now. I pay a boy to run to town for whatever I cannot grow here on the land my daddy sharecropped for Odum when he was alive. The boy keeps his mouth shut for an extra coin. But soon my money will be gone, and we cannot hide here much longer. I can't think what I will do except to leave this place and go somewhere else. It will not be easy, for I am an old woman, and what have I to offer but what I know as a Granny Woman? And how can I offer that, now?

He will find us. I know he will find us, sure as I know my name. I do not ask for word of him or of Lute. I am afraid to know what might have happened in the cabin that night. I do not need to ask. I know he's coming for me, coming for that baby. I hear the hooty owls call his name of an evening, feel the cold of him in the wind that blows before a rain, smell his hate in the wood-smoke of the fire on old Odum's hearth, my hearth now. He is out there.

It is late summer now, and some nights heat lightning dances a jig above us on the mountain ridge. Sometimes the light wakes me, though there is nary a sound in the heavy air. When I wake my heart pounds with fear; I think for a moment the light is a lantern, that someone's sneaked into the cabin, come for the baby. I drape my shawl about me and tiptoe across the pine planking to the corner where she sleeps. She breathes soft and low. Lightning breaks again, and I see her dark lashes, Guy Howard's lashes, laying on her baby cheeks. I snug the quilt over her and tuck it in against the curve of her thin spine. Tonight, at least, she is safe. Tomorrow, who can say? I am an old woman, after all. In the distance, the lightning flashes in a frenzy, and I feel the storm is drawing near.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dean Wesley Smith, a multiple Hugo and World Fantasy Award nominee, has published over 50 short stories, co-edited the award-winning Science Fiction Writers of America Handbook, *and teaches writing all over the country. In 1989, he won a World Fantasy award at about the same time as his short story, "Where Have All the Graveyards Gone?" appeared in the pages of* F&SF. *He has published one novel,* Laying the Music to Rest, *and has sold three more. He is the publisher of Pulphouse, and edits many of their projects. After a hiatus from writing short fiction, he will have over 14 stories appear in 1994 in various magazines and anthologies, including* Grails: The Quest at Daybreak, *and* Christmas Ghosts.

Dean has a series of stories written around the time-travel powers of music, using the device of a jukebox. One such story has appeared in Night Cry Magazine, *another will appear in* By Any Other Fame, *and then there is this one, "Jukebox Gifts." Perhaps, someday, he will collect them all so that we can read the adventures of Radley Stout, his bar and his magic jukebox all in one sitting.*

Jukebox Gifts

By Dean Wesley Smith

THE STEREO BEHIND THE bar was playing soft Christmas songs as I clicked the lock to the front entrance of the Garden Lounge and flicked off the outside light. I could feel the cold of the night through the wood door and the heat of the room surrounding me. I took a deep breath. Christmas Eve was finally here.

I could see the entire lounge and the backs of my four best friends sitting at the bar. I had never been much into decorating with Christmas stuff and this year was no different. My only nod to the season was small Christmas candles for each table and booth. Some customer had tied a red ribbon on one of the plants over the middle booth and the Coors driver had put up a Christmas poster declaring Coors to be the official beer of Christmas. The candles still flickered on the empty tables, but the rest of the bar looked normal. Dark brown wood walls, dark brown carpet, an old oak bar and friends. The most important part was the friends. My four best friends' lives were as empty as mine. Tonight, on the first Christmas Eve since I bought

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the bar, I was going to give them a chance to change that. That was my present to them. It was going to be an interesting night.

"All right, Stout," Carl said, twisting his huge frame around on his bar stool so that he could face me as I wound my way back across the room between the empty tables and chairs. "Just what's such a big secret that you kick out that young couple and lock the door at seven o'clock on Christmas Eve?"

I laughed. Carl always got right to the point. With big Carl you always knew exactly where you stood.

"Yeah," Jess said from his usual place at the oak bar beside the waitress station, "what's so damned important you don't want the four of us to even get off our stools?" Jess was the short one of the crowd. When he stood next to Carl the top of Jess's head barely reached Carl's neck. Jess loved to play practical jokes on Carl. Carl hated it.

"This," I said as I pulled the custom-made felt cover off the old Wurlitzer jukebox and, with a flourish, dropped the cloth over the planter and into the empty front booth. My stomach did a tap dance from nerves as all four of my best customers whistled and applauded, the sound echoing in the furniture and plant-filled room.

David, my closest friend in the entire world, downed the last of his scotch-rocks and swirled the ice around in the glass with a tinkling sound. Then, with his paralyzed right hand, he pushed the glass, napkin and all, to the inside edge of the bar. "So, after hiding that jukebox in the storage room for the last ten months, you're finally going to let us hear it play?"

"You guessed it." I ran my shaking fingers over the cold smoothness of the chrome and polished glass. I had carefully typed onto labels the names of over sixty Christmas songs, then taped them next to the red buttons. Somewhere in this jukebox I hoped there would be a special song for each man. A song that would trigger a memory and a ride into the past. My Christmas present to each of them.

I took a deep breath and headed behind the bar. "I hope," I said, keeping my voice upbeat, "that it will be a little more than just a song. You see, that jukebox is all that I have left from the first time I owned a bar. Since I've owned the Garden Lounge, it has never been played."

Jess, his dress shirt open to the third button and his tie hanging loose around his neck, spun his bar napkin on top of his glass. "So why tonight?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Because a year ago on Christmas Eve I made the decision to buy another bar — the Garden Lounge — and try again."

"And I'm glad you did," David said, lifting his drink in his good left hand in a toast.

"Here, here," Fred said, raising his drink high above his head and spilling part of it into his red hair. "Where else could we enjoy a few hours of Christmas Eve before going home to be bored?"

All four men raised their glasses in agreement as I laughed and joined them with a sip of the sweet eggnog I always drank on Christmas Eve. No booze, just eggnog.

"It's been a good year," I said, "especially with friends like you. That's why I've decided to give each of you a really special present."

"Oh, to hell with the present," Jess said. "How about another drink? I've got a wife to face and knowing her, she ain't going to be happy that I'm not home yet."

"Is she ever happy?" David asked.

Jess nodded slowly. "And I wonder why I drink." He slid his glass down the bar at me as he always did at least once a night. I caught it and tipped it upside down in the dirty glass rack.

"I'll fix everyone a last Christmas drink as you open the first part of your presents." I reached into the drawer under the cash register and pulled out four small packages. Each was the size of a ring box wrapped in red paper and tied with a green ribbon.

"Awful little," Fred said as I slid one in front of each man and then put four special Christmas glasses up on the mat over the ice. I'd had the name of each man embossed on the glass.

"You know what they say about small packages," Jess said, twisting the package first one way, then the other while inspecting it. "But knowing Radley, the size will be a good indication."

"You just wait," I said.

"Great glasses," David said, noticing them for the first time. "They part of the present?"

"Part of the evening," I said. I let each man inspect his own empty glass before I filled it. The names were etched in gold leaf over the logo of the Garden Lounge. I'd had them done to remember the night. I hoped I would have more than a few glasses left when it was all over.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Carl was the first to get his present unwrapped. "You were right, Jess. It's a quarter." He held it up for everyone to see. "Looks like old Radley here is giving us a clue that we should tip more."

I laughed as I filled his glass with ice. "No. It's a trip, not a tip." I finished his drink and slid it in front of him. "Since you unwrapped yours so fast, you get to go first." I nodded at the jukebox. "But there are rules."

"There seem to be a lot of rules around here tonight," Fred said. Everyone laughed.

I held up a hand for them to stop. "Trust me. This will be a special night."

"So give me the rules," Carl said.

I leaned on the dishwasher behind the bar so no one could see that I was shaking. "On that jukebox is every damn Christmas song I could find. Pick one that reminds you of a major point in your life —some *thing* or *time* or *event* that changed your life. After you punch the button and before the music starts, tell us what the song reminds you of."

Carl shook his head. "You know, Stout. You've gone and flipped out."

"Sometimes I think so too," I said. I wasn't kidding him. Sometimes I really did think so.

"Tonight seems to be ample proof," David said, holding up the quarter.

"Just trust me, that is a very special jukebox. Try it and I think you'll discover what I mean."

Carl shrugged, took a large gulp out of his special glass and set it carefully back on the napkin. "What the hell. I've played stranger games."

"So have I," Jess said. "I remember once with a girl named Donna. She loved to—" David hit him on the shoulder to make him stop as Carl twisted off his stool and moved over to the jukebox to study the songs.

I watched as he bent over the machine to read the list. At six-two, two hundred and fifty pounds, Carl was all muscle, with hands that looked like he was going to crush a glass at any moment. A carpenter in the real world outside the walls of the Garden Lounge, he sometimes employed four or five workers at his small business. Mostly he built houses, although his big project this year had been Doc Harris's new office. That had taken him seven months and helped him on the financial side. He had never married and no one could get much information about his past out of him. He had no hobbies that I knew of and winter or summer I had never seen him dressed in anything other than work pants and plaid shirts. He kept his graying black hair cropped

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

short and never wore a hat, no matter how hard it was raining.

After he bent over the jukebox for a moment, Carl's large shoulders slumped, almost as if someone had put a heavy weight square in the middle of his back. With effort he stood, turned around, and faced the bar. His face was pale, his dark eyes a little glazed. "Found one. Now what?"

I took a deep breath. It was too late to back out now. These were my friends.

"Put the quarter in and pick the song." My voice was shaking and David looked at me. He knew me better than anyone and he could tell something was bothering me.

I took a deep breath and went on. "Before the song starts tell us the memory the song brings back."

Carl shrugged and dropped the quarter into the slot. The quiet in the Garden seemed to almost ring as he slowly punched the buttons for his song. "Anything else?" he asked as the jukebox clicked and the mechanism moved to find the record.

"Just state what the song reminds you of. And remember, you only have the length of the song — usually about two and a half minutes. Okay?"

Carl shrugged. "Why?"

"You'll know why in a moment. But remember that. It might be important. Now tell us the memory."

He glanced at the jukebox and then quietly said, "This song reminds me of the night my mother almost died."

I thought my heart had stopped. This wasn't what I had planned. Why did he have to pick a memory like that? This was Christmas Eve. Most people would have memories of good times. Times they wanted to relive. Damn, it was too late now. "Two and a half minutes, Carl," I managed to choke out. "Remember that."

He glanced over at me with a frown as "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas" started. Then he was gone, back into his memory.

And there were only four of us left in the Garden Lounge.

The urine and disinfectant smells of the nursing home washed over Carl like a wave over a child on the beach. He grabbed the door frame and held on, feeling dizzy, confused. A moment before he had been standing in front of the jukebox at the Garden Lounge, playing a stupid game that Radley Stout, the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

owner of the bar, had insisted on playing. Carl had that memory firmly placed in his mind, as well as the memories of the last twenty years.

Yet he also had fresh memories of driving to the nursing home this Christmas Eve. Memories of wishing he could go back to college, wishing he could do something to put Mother out of her pain and suffering. And a very clear, very fresh memory of his decision to help her die with some dignity as she had asked.

It had been a Sunday afternoon right after the second stroke. She had not only asked, she had begged him to help her if another stroke took her mind and left her body alive. That had been her worst fear. Yet he hadn't done anything. The part of his mind that remembered the Garden Lounge knew that she had suffered three more strokes. He had been too afraid.

He squeezed the door frame until his hand hurt. Christmas music played softly down the hall. "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas," the same song he had just punched up on the jukebox at the Garden Lounge. How...? This made no sense.

He forced himself to take a deep breath and look around. There was a white-haired nurse sitting behind the counter of the nurse's station. His mother was in her bed across the small room. Slight, wasted remains of the woman she had once been, she no longer recognized him or anyone else from her life. Most of the time she sat in a wheel chair and just drooled, her head hanging limp.

The doctors had said she would never recover from the series of strokes. She would spend the next five years in that bed and chair. He would grow to hate this room, hate his own fear, hate his own inability to do something to help her.

He glanced over at his own hand against the door frame. It was his hand all right, only young. No scar where the broken window cut it last year. No deep tan from being outside for so long. He was somehow in his young body, with his old memories combined with his young ones. He felt dizzy with the conflicting memories and thoughts. His mouth was dry. He could really use a drink.

From down the hall the song reached its halfway point and Carl felt panic filling his mind. Radley Stout and that damn jukebox of his had given him a second chance. An opportunity to do what he had always wished he had done. Now he was wasting it by doing what he had done the first time.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Nothing.

He took a deep, almost sobbing breath. This time would be different. He checked the hall and then moved across the room and around to the other side of his mother's bed. She smelled of urine. Many times in the next five years the nurses would change her diapers and many times he would be forced to help.

"This is what you wanted, Mom." He swallowed the bile trying to force its way up into his mouth. "I'm doing what you asked."

He pulled the edge of the pillow up and over her face, pressing it hard against her mouth and nose.

"I love you, Mom," he said, softly. "I've learned to be strong. I hope you would be proud of me."

She struggled, trying to twist her head from side to side. But he held on, wanting to be sick, wanting to let go, wanting to let her breathe, but not wanting her to suffer day after day for five long years.

Finally the tension in her body eased and her head became heavy in his hands. Very heavy.

He gently stroked her soft hair as he held the pillow in place for another fifteen seconds. Then he eased his mother's head back into a more comfortable position.

He stood up straight and took a deep breath, never taking his gaze from the face of his dead mother. A feeling of sadness filled him at the same time as a lightness, as if a great weight had been lifted from his shoulders.

"Thanks, Stout," he said out loud as the last faint chords of the song died and took his future memories with it.

AS THE LAST few notes of the Bing Crosby song faded into the carpet and booths of the Garden Lounge, the air shimmered as if a heat wave had passed though the room. None of the plants moved. And I felt no heat. But I knew what it meant.

I glanced around the room. Fred was sitting where Carl had sat, and the planter that Carl had built for me under the east window was gone, replaced with two chairs. Carl wasn't coming back, that much was clear.

During the song I had calmed the other three men down, explained that Carl had gone back into a memory. Then, on the excuse of Carl needing a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

drink when he returned, I took his glass and moved over to the jukebox. I had stood there with one hand on the cool chrome of the jukebox for the last half of the song.

I glanced down at the glass with Carl's name in my hand. So it had worked. Anything I held as I touched the jukebox stayed in this time line after the switch. Good. And because I was touching the jukebox I still remembered Carl. Carl had changed something in his past and his new future no longer brought him to the Garden Lounge. I hoped it was a good new future for him.

I studied the jukebox to see if anything had changed. Damned if I knew how it worked. I had just taken it from storage in my old bar and fixed it, put a favorite record in and the next thing I knew I had found myself facing my old girlfriend, Jenny, in my young body.

Scared me so bad all I did was sit there and stare at her. I had wanted to be with her more than anything else, but I had not had the courage or the desire to ask her to stay with me. On our third year of being together she had gone back to college while I stayed in our hometown to work. That semester she met someone else and by Christmas she was married to him.

The song I had played on the jukebox had been our song. It had been playing the night before she left for school. And that was where the jukebox took me and left me for the entire length of the song.

The next day I played the song again and the same thing happened again. I did nothing but sit and stare at her.

I didn't play another song on the jukebox until I had all the possibilities figured out, including what would happen if I changed something, as Carl obviously had done.

"What the hell are you doing over there?" David said, twisting his custom drinking glass in his good hand.

"Yeah," Jess said. "You going to tell us what we're supposed to do with these quarters?" He flipped it, caught it and turned it over on the bar. "Heads."

"Play a song," I said. None of them remembered Carl or my explanation of where he had gone or anything he had done which included playing the last song. He had never existed for them because they had not been touching the jukebox.

I moved back around the bar, dumped the remainder of Carl's drink out and set the glass carefully on the back bar.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Who's Carl?" David asked.

"Just another friend I wanted to give a glass to."

"So how come you want us to play a song?" Jess asked.

I took a long drink off my eggnog and let the richness coat my dry throat. I was going to miss Carl. I just hoped he was happy. Maybe sometime over the next few days I would look up his name in the phone book. Maybe he had stayed around town. He would never remember me, but it would be nice to see him again and see how things ended up for him.

"You all right?" David asked. All three men were staring at me.

"Yeah, I'm fine. I was just thinking about how songs are like time machines. When you hear one it takes you back to some special moment when the song was playing."

I pointed at the little boxes and the quarters. "Those are for your memory trips. Fred. Why don't you try it? But you've got to follow my rules."

"More damn rules, huh?" Fred said. "Can I at least get off my bar stool or do I have to toss the quarter at the machine from here?"

I tried to laugh but it came out so poorly that David again looked at me with a questioning look. "Go pick out a Christmas song that reminds you of something in your past. Then after you've selected it, stand beside the machine and tell us the memory."

Fred picked up the quarter from the bar and swung around. "I think I can handle that."

"I'll bet that's not what your ex-wife would say," Jess said.

Everyone laughed and that started the nightly joking about Fred's ex-wife. She was well known to the group because it seemed at times that was all Fred could talk about. Her name was Alice and she and Fred had gotten married young, had one child, and gotten divorced in an ugly fashion about ten years before.

Fred was tall and thin, with about twenty pounds of extra weight around his stomach. He used to have bright red hair that was now sun bleached because he worked for the city streets department. He said that almost a quarter of his salary every month went to paying child support, even though his ex-wife very seldom let him see his daughter. He claimed he loved his daughter and one Saturday had brought her in for all of us to meet. Sandy had bright red hair like her father.

"Got one," Fred said as he dropped the quarter into the slot and quickly

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

punched two buttons.

"So what's the memory?" I asked. My stomach felt weak. Was I going to lose Fred, too? Maybe I shouldn't warn him that he only had the time of the song, that if he wanted to change anything, he would have to do it fast.

"The first time I got laid," he said, smiling. "The night Sandy came to be."

God, what was I doing to my friends? What kind of presents were these?

"Stout," David said. "You all right? You're as pale as a ghost."

I nodded and looked up at Fred. "You only have the time of the song. Remember that. Just over two minutes."

Jess laughed. "More than enough time for Fred to get laid, from what I hear."

Fred had taken a step to come after Jess when the Gene Autrey song started and Fred vanished from the bar.

The snow blew hard against Fred's face as he dodged across the rush of pedestrians on the busy sidewalk and in the front door of Abraham's Drug Store. The bell over the door jingled as he entered. The store smelled clean, with a faint background of medicine. The tile floor looked slick from polish.

Old man Abraham was behind the druggist's counter in his white smock. Judy, the clerk, was at the cash register waiting on a heavyset man who was buying cough syrup. In the background the song "Rudolf the Red-nosed Reindeer" played. That was the same song he had punched up a moment before on the Garden Lounge jukebox. How the hell had Radley Stout done this? What was going on?

Fred glanced down at himself. He was still young, dressed in his high school clothes. How could that be? He had been in the Garden Lounge drinking eighteen years in the future. This was some practical joke. He'd get Jess for this. And Stout.

He was about to turn and head back into the storm when the younger memories that were mixed with the older ones reminded him of why he was here. He had come to the drugstore to buy a rubber. A condom.

He was on his way to Alice's house. Her parents were at a Christmas party and would be gone for a long time. He and Alice would start out on the couch watching television and work their way naked to the floor. It would be their first time and because he had chickened out and not bought the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rubber on the way to her house, she had gotten pregnant and they had gotten married right out of high school. Sandy had followed three months later.

He grabbed hold of the door frame, then touched a bottle of hair oil on a nearby shelf. Everything felt real. Damned if he knew what was going on.

He turned back to face old man Abrahams who was now watching him. It was no wonder he had chickened out the first time. He had bought condoms hundreds of times in the last twenty years and right now he still felt afraid. But what the hell could the old man do to him? Fred shook his head. He didn't want to think about that.

He took a deep breath and moved up to the counter.

"Can I help you?" Abrahams said, staring down from his high perch. The guy looked like a cross between God and his dad.

"I'd..." His voice broke and he cleared his throat and tried to lower the pitch to a more normal range. "I'd like to buy a..." He glanced quickly around. Judy was watching him and smiling. He'd had a crush on her for years. It was no wonder his younger self had chickened out.

"Well, young man?"

Fred turned back to face Abrahams. He could feel his face getting hot. If he didn't ask now, Alice would get pregnant and they would end up married. That had turned out to be a fate much worse than asking one simple question. Much, much worse. All those years of shouting and the hate and the ugliness their marriage had been. The only slightly good thing had been Sandy. But who knew how screwed up she was going to be because of the ugly marriage he and Alice had had.

He looked up at Abrahams. "I'd...I'd like to buy a condom." There. He had done it.

Old man Abrahams had the good sense not to laugh. But Fred could tell he was holding back a smile. "Well, son, they come in packages of three or six or twelve."

"Six," he said quickly. No point in having to go through this too often. But a dozen would seem like bragging.

Abrahams nodded and rummaged behind the counter. "Now, which brand would you like?"

At that Judy giggled and Fred could feel his face and neck burning. His younger self wanted to flee the store. He'd never be able to face her.

But his older memories kept him there. "I...I...I don't care. Your best."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Again Abrahams nodded. "That would be Trojans." He slid the box across the counter. "Pay Judy."

Damn him. He was doing this on purpose. He had a register. He could take the money. Again Judy giggled as Fred picked up the box and turned. At that very moment he noticed that the song was almost over and he knew without a doubt that his face was as red as Rudolf's nose.

He pulled a five dollar bill out of his pocket and tossed it on the counter. "Keep the change," he said to Judy and, without looking at her, he sprinted for the front door and the snow beyond. At least now he had the choice to have Sandy or not. He'd have to give this some serious thought.

As the door slammed shut and the song ended, the memories of the choice, Sandy, the marriage to Alice, and the next twenty years faded and were gone.

When the lounge finished shimmering I let go of the jukebox and moved around behind the bar. Carefully I dumped what was left of Fred's drink and placed his glass beside Carl's on the back bar. I hadn't felt this tired in years. I looked at the two glasses. "Good luck, guys," I said softly. "I hope life is better for both of you." But now I only had two friends left in the bar. I could stop this at any time, while there was still someone left to talk to.

"So what are we supposed to do with these quarters?" Jess asked. "I got to get home before that bitch of a wife chews my head off."

I glanced at Jess and then at David. He was looking worried. "You play a song. That's all." I motioned at the jukebox. "But find one that has a strong memory with it." I took a deep breath. I might as well give him a real present. "Maybe even one that was during the time that you met your wife."

Jess laughed. "Why the hell would I want to do that?"

"Trust me," I said. "Just find a song." I dropped down onto the counter behind the bar and concentrated on taking deep breaths and not thinking about Carl and Fred.

"You all right?" David asked. I looked up into his worried face. What would I have done over the last few years without David's friendship? What was I going to do without it over the next few years if I let him play a song?

"Just suddenly got tired. Nothing big." I stood and moved to pour myself another eggnog and watch Jess pick over the tunes. Jess was the best joker. He said he needed the practical jokes to keep his sanity with his bitch of a wife.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But when asked why he didn't just leave her, he always said marrying her was his mistake and he would live with it. That was what he had been taught. Then he would make a joke and change the subject.

"Found one," Jess said. He held up the quarter. "You want me to play it?"

"Yeah. But after you select the song tell Dave and me what memory it reminds you of."

Jess dropped the quarter into the slot and punched two buttons to start the jukebox. "You remember the song, 'Snoopy Versus the Red Baron?'"

David and I nodded.

"That was playing the moment I asked my wife to marry me. Figures, doesn't it?"

David laughed.

But I didn't. I knew I was going to lose Jess also. "Remember that you only have the length of the song. Not one second longer. All right?"

Jess shrugged and started back toward the bar. "Whatever you..."

The song started and he vanished.

"What the hell?" David said, standing and moving toward the jukebox.

I picked up Jess's mostly empty glass and moved around toward the jukebox.

David glanced at the two glasses on the back bar and then at the glass I held. Then he looked over to where Jess had been. "You want to explain exactly what the *hell* is going on here?"

I nodded, too tired to argue. "But come on over and touch the jukebox. It's the only way you're going to remember."

Snoopy and the Red Baron were just starting to go at it on Jess's '65 Ford car radio as Jess found himself face to face with Mary, his soon-to-be bitch-of-a-wife.

"What the...?"

"Is something wrong, Jess, honey?" Mary said, her hand stroking his arm up and down and up and down. She looked more beautiful than he had ever remembered and she smelled wonderfully fresh, as if she had been outside in the country all day. But he knew the look and the smell wouldn't last long. Six months after they were married she would gain fifty pounds and a few years later she would level out a hundred over her marriage weight. But now, in this dream or whatever it was, she looked sexy and very trim in her low-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cut blue dress.

Jess pulled back away from her and looked around. This was his car all right. The same one he had sold in '71. The same one that he and Mary had first made love in. He rubbed his hands along the steering wheel to make sure it felt solid. They were parked just down the tree-lined street from Mary's house.

So how had Stout pulled this off? This had to be some kind of dream or hallucination. That was it. Stout had hypnotized him and he was still sitting in the Garden Lounge while they laughed at him. He'd get them for this.

Mary scooted over closer to him and rubbed his leg real nice, getting the reaction in his crotch she wanted. "Were you going to ask me something?" she said, looking up at him with her large brown eyes.

"That I was," he said. It was a clear memory that in this exact situation he had asked her to marry him. He knew that's what his younger self had been planning to do. He was currently a second year law student and he remembered his classes that Friday morning real well. Yet he also remembered sitting having a Christmas Eve drink with his friends at the Garden Lounge twenty some years in the future. Strange. Too damn strange.

On the radio the Red Baron shot down Snoopy. Stout had said Jess only had the length of the song. Whatever was going on, it was halfway over. Mary rubbed Jess's leg and waited. Waited knowing what the question would be. Waited knowing that she had led him right to where she wanted him.

Well, this time around she would get a surprise because dream or no dream, this was going to be fun. Hell, after all the years with her, he deserved a little fun.

"I wanted to ask you," Jess said, then paused, trying not to smile.

The Red Baron and Snoopy drank a Christmas toast.

"Yes," Mary said, her voice low and sexy. She had been one beautiful woman on the outside. That had kept him blind to all the ugliness that was just under the surface. Blind until it was too late.

"I wanted to ask you if it would be all right if I slept around with a few other women? You know, sow a few wild oats before I settle down?"

That did it. The sultry look drained from her face like wet makeup, to be replaced by the bitch look he had grown so familiar with. "What did you say?" she asked, her voice low and mean and controlled. He knew that voice real well, too.

He smiled, easing toward her, trying to act romantic. "I was just thinking

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that for a few years, maybe five or ten, we could have an open relationship. I'd love to sleep with a few other women. It would be good for us. Honest. You know, free love and all." He moved as if to kiss her and she backed away across the seat.

"Wouldn't you like sleeping with other men? Then after we've both got a little more experience we could live together for a few years. Trying on the old shoes, as the saying goes." Jess knew that would get her. She had said a hundred times how much she hated the thought of living together. For her it was marriage or nothing. Damn, it was hard keeping a straight face. He was going to thank Stout for this one. Best Christmas present he had ever had.

"You're sick!" she screamed. "Sick! Sick! Sick!"

Jess tried to look innocent and sad.

On the radio Snoopy flew off singing about Christmas cheer as Mary rammed against the car door, opened it and ran up the sidewalk.

"Thank you, Radley Stout. I've been dreaming about doing that for years."

The song ended.

And so did the dreams.

I MOVED SLOWLY around behind the bar, dumped out the remainder of Jess's drink and set his glass beside the others on the back bar.

"Got quite a collection there," David said as he moved over to take his stool. "So Carl and Fred were friends of mine on another time line?"

I took a long hard drink of my eggnog and then nodded.

"Jess," David said, "was sent back by the jukebox to his memory and he changed something that moved his life in another direction. And with that new direction he didn't end up coming in here. Right? And he would have no memory of ever being in here because he hasn't been."

Again I nodded and finished off the drink.

David picked up the quarter in front of him and glanced over at the jukebox. "You know this is a wish that everyone has had at one time or another? How come you've never done it?"

"Oh, I did. Actually twice when I first discovered what the jukebox could do. But I didn't change anything. Too afraid, I guess. And, I suppose, not that unhappy with this life." I nodded at the three empty glasses. "That is, until

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tonight."

David took a sip of his drink and looked at his name on the glass. "So you gave the gift of a second chance to your friends for Christmas."

I laughed. "Seemed like a good idea at the time. But I didn't expect to lose everyone. Not exactly sure what I expected, to be honest with you."

"I'm still here."

I glanced over at my best friend. He worked as a vice president of a local bank and enjoyed flying his small plane on the weekend. But back twenty-some years ago he and his new wife, Elaine, had been driving home from a Christmas party. David was scheduled to finish flight school that next spring. He had a dream of flying for the airlines.

That night David had had a little too much to drink and the car missed a slick corner and plowed into an embankment. Elaine was killed and David lost most of the use of his right hand. End of flight school. End of dream.

I reached out and slid the quarter at David. "Your turn."

David shook his head. "No chance. There's no way that I'm leaving you after what you've done for Jess and those two other guys." He pointed at the glasses lined up on the back bar.

I laughed a laugh that sounded bitter even to my ears. "I don't know what exactly I've done except change their life in some fashion. I can only hope it is for the better. But you I do know the jukebox can help." I reached across the bar and patted his ruined right hand. "Go back to before the crash and save Elaine. And yourself."

David jerked as if he had never thought of the possibility.

"You saw it work," I said. "If nothing else, give it a try. You don't have to change anything. Just go back and see Elaine again. It's not a one way trip if you don't change anything."

He looked dazed. "If I don't change..."

I nodded and picked up the quarter and placed it in his good left hand. "Go say hello to your wife."

Still looking dazed, he slowly stood and moved toward the jukebox. "Is it really possible?"

"Yes," I said. "Now pick the right song."

He nodded and turned to study the song list. His tie hung loose in front of him, his right hand useless against the glass of the jukebox.

My stomach hurt and I downed a little more eggnog. I knew that once he saw Elaine he would be unable to stop from changing the past. I was going

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to lose my best friend. But maybe someday I would see him again, striding through an airport in his pilot's uniform. That alone would be worth it.

"Found the song," he said and turned to look at me.

"Then go for it," I said.

He paused, as if he wanted to say something. Then he turned and dropped the quarter into the machine and punched the two buttons.

"State the memory," I said. "Got to follow the rules, you know."

He smiled. "This song reminds me of the night my wife died."

I nodded. "Good luck. And say hello to Elaine for me."

"I will," he said. "And I'll be back."

"In case you're not, I'll be holding onto your glass and the jukebox."

He smiled. "Thanks." The song started and he vanished.

A light snow kept the old Ford's windshield wipers busy as David and Elaine headed down the gravel country road toward the lights of the city.

"Silent Night" was playing on the portable radio on the seat between them. She was singing along, her voice pure and clear, even though a little drunk. The party, just south of town in the foothills, had been a good one and they had stayed far later than they planned.

David looked over at his wife of six months. She had dark brown hair that flowed long and straight down her back. Her eyes were a dark green and her face lightly wrinkled with laugh lines. While David was in school she worked at a dress shop. Her desire was to someday design clothes and he knew she would be, would have been, good at it.

"Son of a bitch," he said out loud. "Stout was right."

"Who was right?" Elaine said, then went back to singing and watching the beautiful wooded countryside flash by through the snow.

David glanced once more at her and then back at the road. He couldn't let her die. Stout had known that.

David braked the car to a quick stop on the side of the road. He turned off the car, yanked the keys out of the ignition and got out. Then as hard as he could, he tossed the keys into the woods. In the silence of the night he could hear them catch brush as they landed.

That was his only set. Now there would be no way he could drive again tonight.

"David," Elaine said, getting out of the car and coming around to him. "What are you doing?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Saving our lives," he said. He grabbed her and held her tight, relishing the feeling of her against him after such a long time. He had never remarried because there had never been anyone again he felt this way about. No one woman who had felt this good.

The faint sounds of "Silent Night" drifted from the portable radio in the car. The song was about half over. He didn't have much time.

"Are you all right?" Elaine asked. "Why did you throw the..."

"I'm fine. Like I said, I was just saving our lives. But now, before that song ends, I need to save a friendship. A very important friendship to me. And I'm going to need your help."

I let my hand slip off the jukebox as the last of the song faded into the empty Garden Lounge. David's glass was in my hand and I looked down at it, feeling its heavy weight.

David must have stopped the wreck.

"Well, Stout," I said to myself out loud just to hear some noise. "Looks as if you've gone and done it now."

I moved slowly around behind the bar and set David's glass beside the other three, name out. "I'm going to have to find some special place for these." I laughed. "To remind me of another life that never was."

The silence seemed to echo in the room. It was going to be a very long, very quiet Christmas.

I refilled my glass of eggnog and moved around to what had been David's favorite stool. The jukebox seemed to call to me. "Come play me, Mr. Radley Stout. Come and see your old girlfriend again. Ask her to marry you. What would it hurt?"

"No," I said loud enough to echo between the empty tables and booths. I squarely faced the glasses on the back bar and held up my mug in a toast.

"Merry Christmas, my friends."

Then I added softly, "Wherever you are."

The empty glasses didn't return my toast, so I went ahead and drank alone. I had the sneaking feeling I was going to be doing that for a while.

I had finished the eggnog and was about to start closing down when someone knocked on the front door.

"I'm closed," I yelled. "Merry Christmas." I was in no mood for visitors now.

But the person knocked again. "All right, all right. Hang on a minute."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I went around to the back bar and, being careful to not look at the four glasses lined up there like so many tombstones, retrieved the keys and headed for the front door.

As I unlocked it and swung it open I heard, "Merry Christmas, Mr. Radley Stout."

David and a woman about his same age stood arm in arm facing the door. He wore an airline overcoat and she had on a nice leather jacket. "David," I said. "How...?"

He unhooked himself from the woman's arm and extended a perfectly healthy right hand for me to shake. "Your hand," I said as I shook it. "You didn't...?" Again I stopped. There was no way he could know about the wreck and his lame hand if it hadn't happened. And in this world it hadn't.

"This is my wife, Elaine," he said.

"I don't know what to say," I took her hand. I felt as if I was shaking the hand of a ghost. "Please come in." I stepped back, the feeling of shock washing over me.

David and Elaine moved into the bar. Both of them walked directly to the jukebox.

"But how could you remember?" I asked, moving up beside them.

"He doesn't," Elaine said, laughing with a tense sort of laugh. David only nodded and then turned to face me.

"Christmas Eve, twenty years ago, Elaine said I suddenly called out the name Stout, then stopped the car. I proceeded to toss the keys to the car into the trees. For what crazy reason I have no idea."

I laughed. "I do. Pretty smart thinking if you want to make sure you can't drive that night."

"But why would I want to do that?" David said. "And how would you know anything about it? This entire thing has been driving me nuts for two decades."

I waved my hand. "I'll try to explain in a minute. For now please go on."

Elaine reached into her purse, pulled out a few tattered pieces of paper, and handed them to me. "For the next minute after he tossed the keys into the brush, David madly wrote this while repeating your name and the name of this bar over and over again so that I would remember it. He made me promise that no matter what he claimed he didn't remember, we would go to this bar on this Christmas Eve at this time to meet you. Not one minute before or one minute after."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

David looked at me and shrugged. "Dammed if I can remember why. It was as if I was possessed."

"In a way, you were," I said.

"You know what else he said?" Elaine asked. She looked at David and he motioned for her to go ahead. "He said it was his Christmas present to you."

David looked at me. "Did it work?"

I nodded, afraid to say anything. But I could feel the smile trying to break out of the sides of my face. And after a moment all three of us were laughing just because I was smiling so hard. I was going to enjoy these new friends.

I motioned for them to take a seat at the bar. "Boy have I got a story to tell you." I scampered like a kid around behind the bar and grabbed the glass with his name on it.

"And for you, David," I said as I held the glass up for them to see. "A very special Christmas present and a toast to friendship."

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO SUBSCRIBERS ON THE MOVE

If you are planning a change of address please notify us as far in advance as possible, and allow six weeks for the change to become effective.

Be sure to give us both your old and new address, including the zip codes. Print clearly and, if possible, attach an old mailing label.

OLD ADDRESS
(attach label here if available)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____
(please print)

NEW ADDRESS

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE,

Mercury Press, 143 Cream Hill Rd, West Cornwall, CT 06796

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FILMS

KATHI MAIO

DINO MIGHT

DINOSAURS are big. Huge. And you don't need to take a gander at the obscene profits of Steve Spielberg — America's favorite filmmaker is expected to personally earn over 100 mil for *Jurassic Park* — to realize that fact. Kids adore those prehistoric critters.

In the presskit for his blockbuster, Spielberg's explanation of the dinosaur's mass kiddie appeal is one he lifted from an anonymous "Harvard psychologist." Kids love dinos because "they're big, they're fierce...and they're dead," says Steve.

I'd have no quarrel with the first two reasons. But the third seems a bit iffy to me. Children normally are not drawn to the dead and buried. The appeal of the dinosaur is not that they are no more. The appeal is in that they *once were*.

Likewise, I was not convinced by Michael Crichton's theory on the popularity of dinosaurs, as internally voiced by Crichton's hero, paleontologist Alan Grant: "He finally decided that children liked dinosaurs because these giant creatures personified the uncontrollable force of looming authority. They were symbolic parents. Fascinating and frightening, like parents. And kids loved them, as they loved their parents."

(Dear Michael, if t-rex is a symbolic mommy figure, then the American family is a lot sicker than any of us dreamed.)

Dinosaurs are *monsters*, guys. And the kid in all of us loves a monster. Yes, they give form to all our fears of domination and violence. But, more importantly, we can identify with the monster as a fantasy figure of empowerment. A monster is nature unchecked — the id unleashed. A tyrannosaur (who'd look pretty silly in an apron or a cop uniform) isn't an

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

authority figure, it is a symbol of chaos. T.R. *defies* authority in ways none of us puny humans will ever manage. It is ruled by nothing and no one, except for its own appetites.

No wonder poor Ah-nald faded at the box office up against such mighty heroes as these. If you want a movie character who can kick serious butt, T-Rex is your gal. (Where does a fifty foot, sixty ton dino sit? Anywhere it wants.) Ah-nald, on the other hand, is on the hotseat these days. As a Republican-around-town aspiring to political power, he must pretend to worry about the effects of violent screen antics upon the impressionable young. T-rex doesn't worry about such things. Her gig is gleeful fury without guilt. Stomp 'em. Chomp 'em. Hasta La Vista, Baby.

Most movie monsters are make-believe. They are made out of whole cloth. Not dinosaurs. The tyrannosaur was big and fierce...and *alive.* She actually walked this same planet. Such monsters were real. We know of their existence, but luckily we don't know too much. A good monster must also be a thing of mystery and dread. Paleontologists have reconstructed skeletons. We know the general shape and size of dinosaurs, but not much else. The rest is speculation. Scientists have theories. And children give range to their imaginations.

And that, my friends, is why I believe cultural depictions of dinosaurs as wide-ranging as the magenta cuddle-pillow called Barney and the velociraptor slasher demons who steal the show in *Jurassic Park* are so popular with youngsters. And it is our fascination with these big lugs that came millions of years before us that made people stampede (somewhat like frightened Gallimimus) to see Steven Spielberg's latest hypefest.

The dinosaurs in the film *Jurassic Park* are the best — that is to say most technically advanced — that I have ever seen. By combining top-of-the-line traditional techniques like puppetry, stop-motion miniature photography, and actors in rubber suits, with the latest 3-D computer animation and transitional morphing, a design team led by Stan Winston, Dennis Muren, Phil Tippett and Michael Lantieri made dinosaurs come to life like never before.

Monster-maker Stan Winston (*Aliens, Terminator* and *T2, Batman Returns,* etc.) is quite eloquent when he speaks of his dedication to creating a fully realized "character" in his constructions of metal, clay, and latex. And, by gum, his dinos definitely give the most layered performance in the movie. I only wish Stan

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

could instill a little of that enthusiasm for character development in the man who was responsible for the human action in *Jurassic Park*.

Spielberg has always done well with latex creatures. His most stirring characters have all been rubber dolls. Jaws was followed by E.T., who has now been succeeded (but not yet financially surpassed) by the beady-eyed charms of t-rex and the velociraptors of *Jurassic Park*.

It's humanity that Spielberg has never been able to believably capture on film. (I'll grant you *Sugarland Express*, if you wish to argue the point, but I was not even convinced by *The Color Purple*, a book that deserved much better—or *Empire of the Sun*.) And now the former wunderkind has given a talented cast little more to do than gape and tremble for two hours. Don't look for layered performance from any of the actors. You'll have to settle for layers of dirt on their faces.

As one who has seen the work of Sam Neill in films like *A Cry in the Dark* and *My Brilliant Career*, and Laura Dern in films like *Rambling Rose* and *Smooth Talk*, I can testify that both actors are very good. You just wouldn't know it from *Jurassic Park*. They play, respectively, a paleontologist and a paleobotanist, lured to the park, as consultants, with the promise of funding for their Montana dig. But their parts are much more easily defined. They are the brave guy and the plucky gal looking after the brave lad (Joseph Mazzello) and plucky miss (Ariana Richards). Face down a dino and become an instant nuclear family: that's the kind of cheap emotional bonding Spielberg specializes in.

The whole transformation of Neill's Dr. Alan Grant from kid-hater to cuddly daddy-figure is also pure Spielberg. It is not in Michael Crichton's book, so I'd like to think that it was also not in Mr. Crichton's screenplay. Major doctoring was done by David Koepp (who shares Crichton's screenwriting credit), however. And I suspect that any man who could co-write the abominably bad *Death Becomes her* could write any Spielbergesque drivel required of him.

The family values nonsense tacked onto the dino-might horror plot didn't bother me half as much as what was expunged. Namely, Crichton's indictment of the scientific community for its eager willingness to prostitute itself to the corporation. Biotechnology and its greedy business handlers are roundly denounced by Crichton.

But except for a few lines from mathematician Ian Malcolm (Jeff

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Goldblum, enjoying the best part in the movie) about the uncontrollable and unpredictable power of nature and dangers of packaging life as if you could "[slap] it on a plastic lunchbox," the movie assigns little blame for the disaster of genetically engineered dinos run amok. In fact, the movie seems to imply that if a fat malcontent (Wayne Knight) hadn't crashed his own computer system as a cover-up for a dastardly deed, the horror might never have happened.

In Crichton's original story, blood-thirsty dinosaurs are already migrating across Central America before the systems designer pulls his little double-cross. There is plenty of blame assigned. And retribution aplenty. Avarice and extreme hubris bring many men to very unhappy ends.

P.R. men are gobbled. Ambitious geneticists are disemboweled. And the arrogant old millionaire behind Jurassic Park, John Hammond, receives his just desserts as buffet dining for a pack of procompsognathids. Part P.T. Barnum and part Ivan Boesky, Mr. Hammond is the most dangerous kind of fool—one with a god complex. How just that he should be nibbled to death by his own creations.

Spielberg's Hammond is much different. He is a jolly grandfather, and tender midwife to his dinosaur pets. He is misguided and a little foolish, but like Frank Morgan's Oz, just an old sweetie at heart. Needless to say, Grampy Hammond (Richard Attenborough) is spared, while less deserving souls fall victim to tooth and claw.

It is interesting, in fact, to take note of who is killed and who survives in the movie version of *Jurassic Park*. It no longer seems to be divine retribution at play. Survival, instead, seems to have something to do with Aryan superiority. If you're a blonde, you've got it made. If you're a black man, you've got trouble.

In *Jurassic Park* (the movie), it seems to come down to who's socially expendable—and I am shocked at the filmmakers' choices—instead of who is at fault. Fairness be damned, Spielberg loves an easy target, including the one t-rex kill played strictly for laughs: a cowardly lawyer who is chomped in two while sitting on a toilet. (I don't know about you, but "kill all the lawyers" jokes don't seem half as funny since that mass-killing at a San Francisco law firm in early July.)

Two black men die during the course of the movie, but at least the film's one Asian, Wu (and what a waste to have such a bit part played by B.D. Wong!), is spared. Or maybe he isn't, since he disappears after his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

one scene. Is he eaten? Or did he go off-island and leave his precious experiments unattended? Who knows? *Jurassic Park*, which is full of loose ends like this, introduces Wu long enough for him to provide a little scientific exposition and then he vanishes into thin air.

Along with all the other people on the island. In the film's opening scene there are dozens of animal handlers and security guards. But during the big day, when the first visitors come to the island, everyone presumably goes off on a boat. Wouldn't there be a few guards with weapons left? And in a completely automated community, with so many crucial systems, wouldn't a computer operator likely stay on duty, as well?

Not in *Jurassic Park*, where Steven Spielberg maintains a ludicrous level of isolation for his surrogate Swiss Family Robinson so as to ensure our sympathy and heighten our tension. Kiddies in peril is one of Spielberg's favorite tricks. And he (over)does it to death and beyond — in this one. Watching terrorized children isn't my idea of a good time. But if it were, I'd at least expect the wee ones' travails to be believable. A kid who grasps a 10,000 volt powerline would be toast. He wouldn't be running across a field a few minutes after the zapping.

You may not believe this, but I am a very forgiving film critic. With his dinosaurs, I granted Mr. Spielberg permission to be as wild and improbable as he liked. He could give a velociraptor cheetah-like speed and intelligence and dexterity enough to open doors with ease. I didn't complain. After all, we don't know, for sure, that dinosaurs didn't possess such talents. We don't know how dinosaurs acted. Nor do we know what they were capable of. We can only speculate. (And I gave Mr. Spielberg and his writers and designers full allowance to speculate in whatever way they felt would make a more exciting movie.)

People are another matter. We know what they are like. And they are not like the characters in a Steven Spielberg movie. These characters are cartoons and stereotypes, designed for reaction shots rather than genuine emotional response. Therefore our affinity for them is less than heartfelt. Oh, we *respond* to their predicaments. Like Pavlovian dogs of the cineplex we tense up or relax in our seats according to cues we receive from Spielberg's camera work and FX, and the (as always) overwrought scoring of John Williams.

Perhaps I wouldn't have missed meaningful content and characterization in *Jurassic Park* if I hadn't

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

remembered that the book did a much better (although far from perfect) job on both levels. Of course, this might well be said of *most* adaptations from novel to film. But we had a right to expect better from the screen adaptation of a story all about moral responsibility.

I came away from *Jurassic Park* marveling at how much Steven Spielberg has in common with the villain of Mr. Crichton's novel. Like Hammond, Spielberg is a showman and a moneymaker. (You get to be America's favorite filmmaker by being the P.T. Barnum of Hollywood.) Like Hammond, he is a master of manipulation and marketing who'd rather not think too much about the ethical implications of his product.

No doubt this is why Spielberg (and his writers) were so reluctant to hold old Hammond accountable for his arrogance and greed. Hammond flies off into the sunset, safe and sound, at the end of the movie. He's a little wistful at his losses, but as untroubled as a baby over what he has done.

It is doubtful that Steven Spielberg worries his head about the inferior product he foisted upon us, either. And why should he, when so many suckers (there's more than one born per minute these days) willingly handed over their money to him six or seven times this summer for his sorry excuse for a feature film?

I tell you, dinosaurs are really big. With enough of them in a movie you can ignore human considerations altogether. I can see *JP2* now, with an all-dinosaur cast. If I thought that Spielberg would do something half as good as the Henson/ABC series *Dinosaurs* (which is full of insightful and humorous commentary on the human condition *through* the lives of its all-dinosaur cast), I'd even go and see it. Actually, no, I wouldn't. I'd hate to be a sucker twice.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Terry Bisson won the Hugo, Nebula, and Theodore Sturgeon Awards for his short story, "Bears Discover Fire." A collection of his short work, under that same title, has just appeared from Tor Books. He has published four novels, Wyrdmaker, Talking Man, Fire on the Mountain, *and* Voyage to the Red Planet. *His short fiction has appeared in* Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine, *and* Omni *as well as* F&SF. *His last story in these pages was "Cancion Autentica de Old Earth" (Oct/Nov 1992).*

Partial People

By Terry Bisson

QUESTIONS ARE BEING raised about people only incompletely seen, or found in boxes, perhaps under benches. Lips and eyes stuck under theater seats like gum. Feet in shoes in rude doorways.

Whatever mystery may have surrounded them can be cleared up at once. These are partial people.

Partial people are not entire in themselves. They do not merit your consideration though they may vie for it.

Partial people may seem to need medical attention, because of lacking a leg, a side, an essential attribute, etc. Their partial quality [sic] is not however indication of a genuine medical condition. They do not need medical treatment, and if so, only a little.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

They may (they will!) claim to be dying, but how can that be? As a wise man once said, how can they truly die, who have only partially lived.

Read my lips: These are partial people.

There has been speculation that they are from another or a parallel Universe. Science however has confirmed that this is not so; or that if they are from another Universe, it is not an important one.

The question of food is bound to come up. In general, it is best to pretend that partial people have already eaten.

Appearance is an issue. The grotesque and often unpresentable appearance of partial people may provoke discussion. Particularly among those looking for something ugly to talk about. Such discussion should be kept to a minimum.

Traffic. It is rarely that they undertake to drive. Automotive controls, even with automatic transmissions (most cars these days!), may prove daunting. Not to mention rentals.

Partial people can cause traffic delays, however: As Leslie R— drove toward a box in his/her lane on G—— Ave. in M——, he/she was surprised to find an arm sticking out of it. He/she was able to judge from the size of the rest of the box, however, that it was not large enough to contain an entire person, and therefore was able to maintain speed and direction, thus avoiding lane changing with its potential for accidents.

To make a long story short, Leslie was not distracted by frantic hand waving. Crushing the box.

Partial people may try to pass themselves off as entire people. Sometimes all, or almost all, the customary visual aspects may be present. It may be an internal organ or aspect that is missing, not apparent to the eye (or eyes, among the entire). For this reason, it is best to assume that importunate

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

strangers are partial people.

Travel. Partial people must pay full fare but may not go the whole way. This limits their travel.

Police experience with partial people is inconclusive. In general, they are worth a beating but not worth an Arrest.

In crowds, they stand cunningly so that three or four together may look like an entire person, or even two embracing. This marks the limit of their ability to cooperate.

Neither "p" is capitalized in partial people.

When they insist on having children, their children are also partial people (partial children). They hardly play.

They may claim to be veterans, especially those which are dis- or un-figured.

They may have trouble counting (being less than one to begin with). Their ideas may appear in contradiction to the ones you hold. Their speech is riddled with sentence fragments and futile attempts at dogma. Even a hello can lead to a loud harangue.

Frantic hand waving is not a friendly greeting with partial people. It is a blatant attempt to gain attention.

Do yourself and society a favor. Don't be taken in. Just say "no" to partial people.

Thank you.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Robert Metzger has sold a dozen short stories to Aboriginal SF *and* Weird Tales. *His first novel,* Quad World, *appeared from NAL/Roc in 1992. He does a science column called "What If?" for* Aboriginal SF *as well as working at Hughes Research Labs in Malibu.*

About the story, he writes, "For months before starting it, I'd had this recurrent daydream about Killer Whales from the future munching the homeless on Skid Row. It somehow seemed quite plausible. Who would believe them! Who would report it! Killer whales could eat thousands of homeless people and no one would know. It was a rather ugly, dark image which slowly gave way to the not so dark story that you now have....

"One strange item associated with this story.

"It may actually be true.

"After I finished the story, the Weekly World News *(a finer newspaper cannot be found anywhere) announced that a dolphin had grown human arms. I kid you not."*

Planet of the Dolphins

By Robert A. Metzger

And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind . . . and God saw that it was good.

— Genesis 1:21

HERMAN DIDN'T WANT to die.

The only sounds in the alley were the whisperings of rats and the distant yowl of a cat in heat. But Herman could hear things that weren't *quite* there — the beating of waves on a distant shore, the scream of a cartwheeling gull, the swish of kelp rolling in the swells, and always the whale songs.

The songs filled his head.

They were evil, angry songs.

And there was no escaping them.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I'll call the cops on you if you don't pay your bill!" screamed a distant voice.

Herman didn't care. Not paying for three stale doughnuts and a cup of coffee which had tasted like burnt thirty-weight was of little consequence as compared to what he faced in the alley — for what waited for him just around the corners of time and space. He knelt down and pushed his back up against the alley's brick wall, all the while knowing that it offered absolutely no safety. But old reflexes died hard. Brick and mortar were no obstacle to the things that could twist reality. His hands shook. His stomach groaned.

"Ishmael!" he screamed.

There was no reply. But he hadn't really expected one. Ishmael would only act at the last possible moment. That is, if he acted at all.

"Ugly son of a bitch," he whispered.

Herman sniffed the air. The salty-seaweed tang was unmistakable. The ozone stink of dimensions ripping apart was suddenly oppressive. He shook all over and pissed in his pants. It didn't matter. Herman looked up at the band of night sky above him, at the dim stars and the neon glow. The Strip was less than three blocks away, and just beyond that was Aqualand. He'd gotten too close.

And now he was going to pay for that.

"Ishmael!" he screamed again as the sky above him *shifted,* filling with diamond motes and rainbow eels. There was no time for another scream. The sky suddenly turned *liquid.*

Splash.

Vegas had seen less than two inches of rain in the last year. It was bone-dry, dusty, dirty, everything coated in grit and sand. But now it rained in buckets, barrels, dump trucks.

Oceans.

Herman could not breathe. The salt water beat at him, blinding him, filling his nose and mouth. The torrent pushed him down against the alley floor, driving his face into the asphalt.

"Herman Melville!"

It was a bellow so resonant that it almost cracked his skull. Herman pushed himself up on hands and knees and sucked down a breath. The water was elbow-deep but quickly receding. He looked down the alley, toward the glow, just past a wheelless, rusted-out hulk. A jewel of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

impossible colors and infinite angles hung there.

"Herman Melville!" screamed the jewel.

Herman stood and almost had time to turn. But the jewel unfolded itself, the hidden dimensions uncurling, time itself unraveling. Here and now touched there and elsewhen.

"Help me!"

There was a flash of black and white, the beating of a fluke, the glint of an ivory tooth, and then it hung in front of him, nestled in a crystal web, all of it hovering about a foot above the alley floor.

"No," whispered Herman, as he stood, mesmerized, staring into the unblinking eye of *Orcinus orca*.

"Herman Melville!" roared the killer whale. It reached out from the floating crystalline cage with flippers that were not flippers at all, but stubby arms and long slender fingers. "This planet will be ours!" bellowed the whale. It beat its tail and the crystalline cage was propelled down the alley.

"No!" screamed Herman.

He turned, tried to run, but his feet rose up from the ground as the whale's slender fingers wrapped around his waist and jerked him up. He was pulled through the crystalline slats of the cage. Herman pounded at the whale's rubbery black-and-white face. But it did no good. The mouth opened, revealing glistening teeth and a pink gullet. Herman was shoved chest-deep into the whale's mouth.

Jaws snapped down.

Inversion.

Rotation.

Translation.

"Ahhhhhhh!"

Herman hit asphalt, face-first, the dry, gritty surface scraping his forehead. He leaped up and ran, stumbling over trash cans and boxes, tripping, hitting the brick wall, bouncing from it, and then stumbling from the alley and out onto the street.

He collapsed.

And as he fell, he looked back into the alley. There was no whale, no crystalline cage, no flaming crystal. It was just an alley — a dry, dusty Vegas alley. Reality had reasserted itself. The back of his head hit asphalt. The neon sky and dull stars swam above him.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Another bifurcation successfully transitted."

Neon sky and dull stars were gone. Ishmael hung over him, staring at him with his too-large eyes and grinning with a smile full of razor-blade teeth.

"Tomorrow is safe, the future retained."

Herman blinked.

And then he leaped to his feet. "You son of a bitch!" he screamed. "The orca almost got me!" He took a swing at Ishmael's misshapen head and missed, his fist flying *through* it, cutting cleanly from right to left ear, having been translated along directions beyond normal three-dimensional space.

"You're but a player," said Ishmael.

Herman swung again, and once more his fist passed through Ishmael's head. "I'll kill you!"

"And this play has not *quite* come to its inevitable conclusion."

Ishmael vanished, moving orthogonally to Herman's reality. It was only then that Herman saw the two cops, the ones with guns drawn, the ones that he realized were probably in search of a doughnut thief.

"On the ground!" ordered the cop on the left.

Herman stood frozen, overloaded. The transition from the killer whale and Ishmael, to cops and pulled guns, was too abrupt. He raised up his left hand to point toward the alley, wanting to explain about the orca and why he had run out of the diner when he had smelled the salt water. He managed to open his mouth.

Both cops fired.

The high-voltage darts hit Herman in the chest. His unconscious body convulsed, danced, every muscle spasming. He hit the ground, flipping and flopping, looking just like a fish out of water.

HERMAN STARED through a window on the twenty-seventh floor of the Elvis Presley Memorial Psychiatric Hospital. High noon and the distant Vegas Strip looked ugly and drab, cars and cabs scuttling up and down the road, darting in and out of casino parking lots, looking just like cockroaches in search of cake crumbs. He only glanced at the scene for a moment, and then looked farther west, out toward Red Rock Canyon.

Aqualand.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The dolphin pools seemed to blaze — the late-afternoon sun reflecting from them. Herman wished the blaze was real, that burning gasoline instead of salt water filled those pools and that the dolphins were being turned into charcoaled briquettes.

"Burn, Flipper," he whispered.

"That aggression is misplaced."

Herman turned around. Dr. Julian Stearns Cutler was seated behind the plastic table. His hands were neatly folded, resting on a thick, dog-eared folder. His white lab coat was wrinkle-free and the pens in his pocket perfectly aligned from right to left in descending order of height. His hair was slicked back, flawless, not a strand out of place.

He smiled.

Herman found the so-sincere, compassion-filled smile nauseating. He always did. He'd seen that smile far too many times.

Herman shuffled toward the table, the only sound he made being the scrap of his paper booties against the linoleum floor. He pulled out the plastic chair on his side of the table and slowly sat. He folded his hands, mimicking Dr. Cutler, and then offered up his own smile.

"Of course it's misplaced, Doctor," he said with the sweetest, most sincere voice he could manage without actually blowing his lunch. "Perhaps my obsession, the key to all this aggression, stems back to the hatred of my mother, Mrs. Melville, that kind and gray-haired old soul who could not resist naming her son Herman, forever linking me to the cetaceans."

"What do you think?" asked Dr. Cutler, leaning forward. Having unfolded his hands, he was now tugging at his chin as if some phantom goatee hung there.

Herman chuckled. If he'd had a nickel for every time that had been asked of him he could have opened his own nuthouse and spent the rest of his life in the comfort and spendor of the Napoleon suite. He narrowed his eyelids to slits. "I think you're a pompous, anal-retentive control freak who would suffer a complete mental meltdown if a spontaneous, original thought managed to penetrate your thick I-attended-Harvard-Medical-School ego."

Dr. Cutler jerked back as if he'd been slapped.

That was exactly what Herman had intended. He was exhausted, beat, and was in no mood to be analyzed for the umpty-umpth time by Dr. Cutler.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He wanted to spend his mandatory seventy-two hours in peace and quiet.

Dr. Cutler ran his hands across his perfect hair and then leaned forward again. "I only want to help you. It is all I *ever* want." He thumped his right index finger against the thick stack of papers in front of him. "We have quite a history together."

Herman nodded. He'd been in and out of Presley for almost twelve years. "If you really want to help me, then reach into the future and get these goddamned whales and dolphins off my butt."

Dr. Cutler opened his mouth, getting ready to say something that Herman was certain would be thoughtful and soothing, but Herman didn't give him the chance.

"That's all the help I need!" he screamed. "It's all the help I've *ever* needed!"

"Why are the whales and dolphins after you?" Dr. Cutler asked gently.

Herman stood and kicked back his chair so that it flew across the room and ricocheted off a far wall before coming to a rest. The both of them were doing the same headcase-shrink dance they'd had so many times before. Herman knew that, knew that he should just sit down, shut up, do his seventy-two hours and that would be that. But he was tired, on edge, had just been chest-deep in the mouth of a killer whale and couldn't stand one more second of psychocompassion.

"Because I'm the one that can stop them, you son of a bitch! Reality is fluid, the number of possible futures infinite. They come from a tomorrow in which man is gone, in which the planet is theirs. But I'm the key to destroying that future, to seeing that it never comes about!"

Dr. Cutler nodded and smiled.

"I'll say it you smug son of a bitch," screamed Herman, knowing that he shouldn't say it, knowing how textbook, how classically insane it would sound. "I've saved the human race dozens of times. Every time one of them doesn't get me, can't kill me, their reality drifts away, slips back into the infinite possibility of maybe futures. But they keep coming back. If I die, if they can kill me, then I won't be there at the *key* bifurcation point to stop whatever it is that will be responsible for creating their world."

"Then you're the Messiah?" asked Dr. Cutler. "You will save all future generations of the human race from the whales and dolphins who are intent on our destruction?"

"Yes!" screamed Herman. "I'm the one, the goddamned Messiah who

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

will save the world." He slammed his fist against the tabletop. "But it's not my choice. You know it. You've heard it all before. Same old record. I can't leave, can't get out of Vegas and escape it. I'm a Messiah with a gun held to his head. Ishmael won't let me go, always *translating* me back here whenever I try and get out of town."

Dr. Cutler nodded. "Excellent," he said. "You've admitted to the delusion much more quickly than you normally do. Perhaps you're finally ready to move past it, to see what is real and what is not."

Herman turned around and walked back to the window. He stared out at Aqualand and the still-burning pools where the dolphins swam. "That's real, you stupid son of a bitch," he said quietly.

"Exactly," said Dr. Cutler.

"It appears to be getting worse."

Herman leaned back in his chair. He'd resigned himself to talking, to feeding Dr. Cutler the psychogruel that he appeared to so desperately need. It passed the time.

"A lot worse. Just a few years ago I could have walked right into Aqualand without them making a move. But now I can't get within a couple of miles of it. Just last month, a Bottlenose in a trench coat and shades tried to chomp me when I was panhandling at Caesars."

Dr. Cutler scribbled notes in a tight, controlled scrawl.

"I spotted him though, smelled the tuna on his breath just before he tried to take off my head."

Scribble.

Scribble.

Herman grinned. He hadn't smelled a thing. The first he had even known about the Bottlenose was when Ishmael had stepped through the side of a Greyhound bus and *inverted* the damned dolphin.

"And I assume that it was Ishmael who saved you?"

"Always," said Herman. "He's got a bigger stake in this than any of us. The future, the human future is his. He comes from a billion years down the line, and pops back here just to make sure that everything stays on track, that I do what has to be done."

"Which is?"

Herman smiled. That was *the* question. He had no idea, but could only guess that it had something to do with Aqualand. That had to be the place,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and the time had to be near. The cetaceans were getting anxious, sloppy, making mistakes. He'd smelled the seawater in the diner minutes before the orca had actually punctured the past. They were getting careless.

Dr. Cutler looked up from his notepad. "What do *you* think this man from the future wants you to do?"

Herman was about to tell Dr. Cutler to piss off, that he'd had enough of the inquisition for the time being, but he was interrupted.

Ishmael walked into the room.

He had not used the door, but had simply materialized as if he had walked around a corner that hadn't quite been there. He stood next to Dr. Cutler, with a toothpick in his stubby fingers, picking at something bloody that was between his front teeth. Herman jumped up from his seat and did an instant 360, looking for the attacker, certain that another orca was about to materialize. Nothing popped out of the air.

"Inquiries are best made at the source," said Ishmael.

Herman did not understand. He hadn't asked Ishmael a thing. He stared into Ishmael's bulging eyes, trying to make contact, desperately wanting to understand. His life might depend on that understanding.

But Ishmael wasn't looking at him.

He was staring down at Dr. Cutler.

"Urrrrf."

Herman looked at Dr. Cutler. The man had turned the color of nonfat milk — pale white with a bluish tint.

"Urrrrf," he said again.

Herman fell into his chair.

"You can see him," he said, not asking a question, but stating an obvious fact. *No one* had ever seen Ishmael except for himself. Ishmael had always walked some ultratight sliver of reality that had been tuned only to *his* brain.

"Ishmael?" asked Dr. Cutler.

Herman was impressed, actually amazed. Dr. Cutler's eyes were as big as golf balls, some muscle in his left cheek was twitching like a metronome on speed, and his fingers were doing a slam dance across the tabletop, but he had not gone screaming out of the room, or simply fainted away.

"Ishmael?" he said again.

Ishmael smiled, showing a dazzling array of teeth. "Correct, Doctor."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dr. Cutler slowly lowered his head and looked across the table at Herman. "Ishmael?" he asked in a whisper.

Herman simply nodded.

Dr. Cutler gave one big body twitch, a nose-to-butt spasm that should have broken bones, and then looked back up at Ishmael. "The door to this room is locked and I know that the guards would not have let you in."

Herman sighed. This was more in step with the old Dr. Cutler that he knew and loathed. When faced with something as impossible as Ishmael, that was the most imaginative question that he could come up with — a locked door.

"Doors are a concept I choose not to participate in." said Ishmael, who reached toward Dr. Cutler with his stubby hand, which suddenly became paper-flat, twisted at right angles, folded over, and then simply vanished. A stump of an arm, perfectly sliced, showing bone and muscle, but not bleeding or spewing bits, hung in front of Dr. Cutler's face.

"I see," whispered Dr. Cutler, who then burped, his cheeks suddenly swelling as his mouth filled with something that had just been tossed up his throat, and then slowly deflated as he swallowed it back down.

Again Herman was impressed.

There was a lot more to Dr. Cutler than he had ever imagined. The first time *he* had met Ishmael he had run through a glass wall at the Mirage and spent a month in the Clark County nut bin.

"The critical juncture has arrived," said Ishmael, now looking over at Herman. "And you will require assistance."

Herman tried to say something, but there was no time. He suddenly realized that he was no longer looking at Ishmael, but was somehow seeing the inside of his own head.

His eyeballs had inverted.

His mouth suddenly swallowed his face.

And then he actually kissed his own ass good-bye.

STOP IT," said Herman as he took a swipe at Dr. Cutler and knocked the pens out of his hand. "You're looking too damn twitchy."

Dr. Cutler simply nodded, bit at his lip, and then began to suck on his thumb. Herman didn't know what was wrong with him. He'd handled his first encounter with Ishmael amazingly well, but being

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

translated to Aqualand had been too much.

Dr. Cutler had melted down.

"What do you think?" he whispered.

Herman didn't answer, knowing that the question wasn't being addressed to him. Cutler had been turned into a psychobabble Top 40 station repeating over again the most cherished psycho one-liners ever uttered by a shrink. Herman looked around the arena. There were thousands of sunburned, Bermuda-shorted, camcorders-glued-to-their-faces-type tourists filling the stands. All of them were enamored with the antics of Larry, Moe and Curly, three big Bottle-nosed dolphins that darted and leaped around the big pool, actually managing to toss crème pies at their trainers, all in some tribute to the Three Stooges. The whole place was a zoo, standing room only, full of Vid crews, this being the premiere of the Aqualand's Three Stooges Go to College show.

Herman didn't give a rat's ass about the show or the stupid dolphins. He was too busy staring at the guy two rows down who was dressed in a trench coat and floppy hat.

That was the *dolphin* that mattered.

"You see that guy over there," said Herman who reached up, grabbed Dr. Cutler by the chin and turned his head.

Dr. Cutler twitched. "How does that make you feel?" he whispered.

It scared the shit out of Herman. He'd spotted three of the Bottlenoses in the audience, and two down front by the exit. They were all hiding in trench coats and floppy hats. The two down front were waddling back and forth on their stumpy little legs staying in front of the exit as if on guard duty. And Dr. Cutler could see them. Up until now he'd been the only one, the Bottlenoses and Orcas just *beyond* the perception of everyone else. But now that was over. He finally had an ally — even though that ally was currently suffering from some sort of mental short curcuit.

"We got to make a move," said Herman, who poked Dr. Cutler in the ribs, and then reached over to his front pocket and removed a stainless-steel mechanical pencil from it. "What we need is a diversion."

"Do you ever consider how they feel?" asked Dr. Cutler.

Herman didn't care how they felt. The cetaceans weren't even real, just ghosts from a future that had no right to exist. Herman grabbed Dr. Cutler's right hand, tugged him up from his seat and dragged him past a horde of babbling tourist types all munching Dolphin Dogs and slurping

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Whale Shakes, stopping only when they got to the main aisle.

"When I poke the bastard, he'll let out a high-frequency yelp that will get the rest of them running up here. That's when we make our move. Those two Bottlenoses down by the exit are guarding something, and that's where we're going."

"Go with your feelings," said Dr. Cutler.

Herman tugged him down the aisle two rows, and then stopped. The Bottlenose was just the second seat in. Herman stared just a moment at his large snout and at the watery eye on the right side of his face. The Bottlenose didn't see him, but appeared to be totally mesmerized by Curly squirting a seltzer bottle at a coed in a bikini.

Herman lunged forward.

He drove the mechanical pencil into the Bottlenose's back, ramming it in until only the worn-out little eraser at the tip was poking out. He then shoved the dolphin forward into the row of seats just in front of it, starting a chain reaction. He knew that no one could *quite* see the Bottlenose, wouldn't know what had just struck them from behind, but that wouldn't stop them from flying face-first into the row in front of them.

The crowd screamed.

Dozens of people fell down the stadium, bouncing from bench to bench, gathering momentum, sucking up unwary victims, behaving just like a growing snowball heading down a ski run. Those not bouncing face-first down the stadium benches jumped up from their seats, streamed into the center aisles and started to move toward the exits.

"Move it!" screamed Herman as he saw the two Bottlenoses guarding the exit begin to waddle up into the bleachers toward all the commotion. He tugged Dr. Cutler toward the exit.

"Just because you're moving doesn't mean you're getting anyplace," said Dr. Cutler.

"Shut up!" screamed Herman as he jerked Dr. Cutler down the stairs.

"Over here," said Herman, who shoved Dr. Cutler into a corner, out of range of the surveillance camera mounted above the steel door which had a security keypad mounted in it. The building that this door was sunk into had been behind the dolphin tank. "We got to get past that door," said Herman. "It makes no damn sense to have a high-security door like that at Aqualand. There's something wrong going on behind that door."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"The grass only *appears* greener on the other side of the hill," said Dr. Cutler.

The door suddenly seemed to shimmer, to twist, and then Ishmael walked through it.

"The time is now and the place is here," said Ishmael. "There will be four coming through this door. Wait for the last one. It is his weapon that will be the key."

Herman just nodded. This was all happening so fast, too fast, but he didn't really care. He could sense that it would soon be over and that was all that really mattered. He wanted it done and behind him, wanted no more dolphins and orcas in his life.

Ishmael turned to his left. He had zero width and simply disappeared. Just then the door slammed open and the first security guard came running through, pistol in one hand and walkie-talkie in the other, pressed into his face as he barked out orders. Herman pushed Dr. Cutler and himself farther into the corner. The security man raced past them, heading toward the arena exit and the stampeding riot that was occurring there. Two more followed, dressed in black body armor and carrying gas-grenade rifles.

Herman got ready, tensed, planted the heel of his left foot against the wall at his back and waited. He didn't have long to wait. The fourth security guard ran through the door. Herman launched himself. He hit the black-suited guard in the side and the both of them crashed into the adjacent wall.

The security guard instantly went limp.

Herman didn't worry, didn't question any of this. This was his destiny, the whole thing ordained. He was creating the future, saving it for all of mankind. He pulled the security guard's pistol from its holster, grabbed Dr. Cutler by the arm and tugged him through the open door.

They bounded down steel steps.

They crashed through a partially opened door.

They stopped in front of a tank.

It was a Plexiglas monolith, twenty by twenty by twenty feet, sitting in the center of a room filled with glaring lights, row after row of electronic panels, running, frantic lab-coat types, and more than a dozen security guards positioned in the scaffolding above the tank.

"Put down your gun!" echoed an amplified voice.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Herman didn't even realize he had the pistol raised. He was staring into the tank. A Bottlenose hung there, enmeshed in wires and struts, the top of its head peeled back and its exposed skull plastered with a bundle of twinkling fibers.

But this was no Bottlenose like Larry, Moe or Curly.

This one was different.

Its front flippers were no longer flippers. This dolphin had little stumpy arms and long tapered fingers that fluttered in the water. It shrieked, its wail penetrating through the Plexiglas tank.

Herman lowered the pistol, aiming it right at the mutant Bottlenose's overly large head. He squeezed the trigger.

"Violence is no answer!"

Herman felt his arm being jerked up, and saw just out of the corner of his vision Dr. Cutler pushing at his arm.

Bang!

The upper right corner of the Plexiglas tank shattered, a spiderweb pattern streaking across it. But it didn't break. Hands grabbed him, wrapped around the pistol and then threw him down to the ground.

"No!" screamed Herman. He knew all those white-coated psycho-scientists didn't understand what they'd created, what was really in that tank. He was flipped over on his back and heavy boots stood on his outstretched arms and legs.

Ishmael materialized over him.

His face dissolved, a rubbery snout protruding from it, his big eyes floating to the side of his now obviously Bottlenose head. "The final bifurcation," said Ishmael. "You were the Creator, the Savior, the one responsible for bringing us back to the sea."

"Son of a bitch!" screamed Herman, not quite sure what he'd done, but knowing that his actions had *not* erased a future controlled by the cetaceans at all, but had somehow *created* it.

Then there was suddenly a blaze of lights.

There were shouts and screams for security.

Herman's hands and legs were let go of.

He sat up and looked back through the open doorway and up the metal stairwell. It was full of reporters and Vid techs, those that had been here for the opening day of the Three Stooges Go to College show. Their cameras pointed first at the mutant dolphin, and then down to him.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He understood now.

Everything.

"What are you feeling?" screamed Dr. Cutler.

Herman said nothing. He turned and stared into the dolphin tank. The thing was staring at him, smiling with that stupid dolphin smile. It waved a hand at him. "You win," Herman whispered.

Herman stared at the Vid monitor. He couldn't hear it but he didn't have to. He stood on the sidewalk along with a few dozen others, staring through the window at an array of Vids, all tuned to the same channel.

This was *Release* day.

There had been almost twenty of the genetically tweaked dolphins at Aqualand, the whole thing some CIA-funded experiment to create dolphin saboteurs that could be used to plant explosives on the hulls of Chinese subs. It had been headlines for weeks. The United Mammal Front and the Animal Firsters had put all their muscle, money, and bought-and-paid-for senators into stopping the project and freeing the poor, pathetic, tortured dolphins.

Freeing the Dolphins.

"They used us," said Herman.

Dr. Cutler shook his head and tugged on his imaginary goatee. "We all need to be needed," he said.

Herman grabbed him by the elbow and tugged him away from the window. He didn't want to see the dolphins released, didn't want to think about them free in the ocean to multiply, to outsmart the untweaked dolphins, to eventually take over the seas, develop their own dolphin science, to eradicate man and then send Ishmael back in time to use him and make certain that the original dolphins would be released into the ocean.

It was over.

And he'd lost.

"Come on, Dr. Cutler," he said, dragging the doctor down the street. Dr. Cutler was fried, never having recovered from the ordeal. Looking after Dr. Cutler was an act of penance for the sin he'd committed against mankind. At least that was what he tried to convince himself of.

He turned the doctor down the first ally they came to. Herman knew a shortcut. He was in desperate need of doughnuts and coffee. They slowly

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

maneuvered around piles of rotted cabbage and rusted dumpsters.

Pssst.

Herman stopped.

Pssst.

He slowly turned. There was an ugly-looking dog wedged between a couple of dumpsters, a mutt with a swollen head and big watery eyes. It raised up its front paw, pointed it at Herman, and then uncurled that paw to show five stubby *fingers.*

"You Herman Melville?" asked the dog.

Herman simply nodded.

"The guy responsible for dolphins running the whole show up the line?"

Again Herman nodded.

"Well if you want to do something about it, I got a plan. Down in L.A., at the UCLA Med Center, they're working on grafting chimp frontal lobes onto Dobermans. We need your help to make sure that work gets done."

Herman said nothing.

He knew there was nothing that had to be said.

"We'll treat you right," said the dog. "We've always liked you, always been *your* best friend. You help us get rid of these damn dolphins, and there will always be a place for you at *our* fireplace."

"Home is where the heart is," said Dr. Cutler.

"You in?" asked the mutant dog who had come from some phantom future.

Herman smiled.

Flipper would pay.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Doesn't anybody *care about the future?"*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SCIENCE

BRUCE STERLING

WATCHING THE CLOUDS

IN THE simmering depths of a Texas summer, there are few things more soothing than sprawling on a hillside and watching the clouds roll by. Summer clouds are especially bright and impressive in Texas, for reasons we will soon come to understand — and anyhow, during a Texas summer, any activity more strenuous than lying down, staring at clouds, and chewing a grass-stem may well cause heat-stroke.

By the early nineteenth century, the infant science of meteorology had freed itself from the ancient Aristotelian dogma of vapors, humors, and essences. It was known that the atmosphere was made up of several different gases. The behavior of gases in changing conditions of heat, pressure and density was fairly well understood. Lightning was known to be electricity, and while electricity itself remained enormously mysterious, it was under intense study. Basic weather instruments — the thermometer, barometer, rain gauge, and weathervane — were becoming ever more accurate, and were increasingly cheap and available.

And, perhaps most importantly, a network of amateur natural philosophers were watching the clouds, and systematically using instruments to record the weather.

Farmers and sailors owed their lives and livelihoods to their close study of the sky, but their understanding was folkloric, not basic. Their rules of thumb were codified in hundreds of folk weather-proverbs. "When clouds appear like rocks and towers/the earth's refreshed with frequent showers." "Mackerel skies and mares' tails/make tall ships carry low sails." This beats drowning at sea, but it can't be called a scientific understanding.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Things changed with the advent of Luke Howard, "the father of British meteorology." Luke Howard was not a farmer or sailor — he was a Quaker chemist. Luke Howard was born in metropolitan London in 1772, and he seems to have spent most of his life indoors in the big city, conducting the everyday business of his chemist's shop.

Luke Howard wasn't blessed with high birth or a formal education, but he was a man of lively and inquiring mind. While he respected folk weather-wisdom, he also regarded it, correctly, as "a confused mass of simple aphorisms." He made it his life's avocation to set that confusion straight.

Luke Howard belonged to a scientific amateur's club in London known as the Askesian Society. It was thanks to these amateur interests that Howard became acquainted with the Linnaean System. Linnaeus, an eighteenth-century Swedish botanist, had systematically ranked and classified the plants and animals, using the international language of scholarship, Latin. This highly useful act of classification and organization was known as "modification" in the scientific terminology of the time.

Though millions of people had watched, admired, and feared clouds for tens of thousands of years, it was Luke Howard's particular stroke of genius to recognize that clouds might also be classified.

In 1803, the thirty-one-year-old Luke Howard presented a learned paper to his fellow Askesians, entitled "On the Modifications of Clouds, and On the Principles of Their Production, Suspension, and Destruction."

Howard's speculative "principles" have not stood the test of time. Like many intellectuals of his period, Howard was utterly fascinated by "electrical fluid," and considered many cloud shapes to be due to static electricity. Howard's understanding of thermodynamics was similarly halting, since, like his contemporaries, he believed heat to be an elastic fluid called Caloric.

However, Howard's "modifications" — cirrus, cumulus, and stratus — have lasted very successfully to the present day and are part of the bedrock of modern meteorology. Howard's scholarly reputation was made by his "modifications," and he was eventually invited to join the prestigious Royal Society. Luke Howard became an author, lecturer, editor, and meteorological instrument-maker, and a learned correspondent with superstars of nineteenth-century scholarship such as Dalton and Goethe. Luke Howard became

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the world's recognized master of clouds. In order to go on earning a living, though, the father of British meteorology wisely remained a chemist.

Thanks to Linnaeus and his disciple Howard, cloud language abounds in elegant Latin constructions. The "genera" of clouds are cirrus, cirrocumulus, cirrostratus; altocumulus, altostratus, nimbostratus; stratocumulus, cumulus and cumulonimbus.

Clouds can also be classified into "species," by their peculiarities in shape and internal structure. A glance through the World Meteorological Organization's official *International Cloud Atlas* reveals clouds called: fibratus, uncinus, spissatus, castellanus, floccus, stratiformus, nebulosus, lenticularis, fractus, humilis, mediocris, congestus, calvus, and capillatus.

As if that weren't enough, clouds can be further divvied up into "varieties," by their "special characteristics of arrangement and transparency": intortus, vertebratus, undulatus, radiatus, lacunosis, duplicatus, translucidus, perlucidus and opacis.

And, as a final scholastic fillip, there are the nine supplementary features and appended minor cloud forms: incus, mammatus, virga, praecipitatio, arcus, tuba, pileus, vella, and pannus.

Luke Howard had quite a gift for precise language, and sternly defended his use of scholar's Latin to other amateurs who would have preferred plain English. However elegant his terms, though, Howard's primary insight was simple. He recognized that most clouds come in two basic types: "cumulus" and "stratus," or heaps and layers.

Heaps are commoner than layers. Heaps are created by local rising air, while layers tend to sprawl flatly across large areas.

Water vapor is an invisible gas. It's only when the vapor condenses, and begins to intercept and scatter sunlight as liquid droplets or solid ice crystals, that we can see and recognize a "cloud." Great columns and gushes of invisible vapor continue to enter and leave the cloud throughout its lifetime, condensing within it and evaporating at its edges. This is one reason why clouds are so mutable — clouds are something like flames, wicking along from candles we can't see.

Who can see the wind? But even when we can't feel wind, the air is always in motion. The Earth spins ponderously beneath its thin skin of atmosphere, dragging air with it by gravity, and arcing wind across its

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

surface with powerful Coriolis force. The strength of sunlight varies between pole and equator, powering gigantic Hadley Cells that try to equalize the difference. Mountain ranges heave air upward, and then drop it like bobsleds down their far slopes. The sunstruck continents simmer like frying pans, and the tropical seas spawn giant whirlpools of airborne damp.

Water vapor moves and mixes freely with all of these planetary surges, just like the atmosphere's other trace constituents. Water vapor, however, has a unique quality — at Earth's temperatures, water can become solid, liquid or gas. These changes in form can store, or release, enormous amounts of heat. Clouds can power themselves by steam.

A Texas summer cumulus cloud is the child of a rising thermal, from the sun-blistered Texan earth. Heated air expands. Expanding air becomes buoyant, and rises. If no overlying layer of stable air stops it from rising, the invisible thermal will continue to rise, and cool, until it reaches the condensation level. The condensation level is what gives cumulus clouds their flat bases — to Luke Howard, the condensation level was colorfully known as "the Vapour Plane." Depending on local heat and humidity, the condensation level may vary widely in height, but it's always up there somewhere.

At this point, the cloud's internal steam-engine kicks in. Billions of vapor molecules begin to cling to the enormous variety of trash that blesses our atmosphere: bits of ash and smoke from volcanoes and forest-fires, floating spores and pollen-grains, chips of sand and dirt kicked up by wind-gusts, airborne salt from bubbles bursting in the ocean, meteoric dust sifting down from space. As the vapor clings to these "condensation nuclei," it condenses, and liquefies, and it gives off heat.

This new gush of heat causes the air to expand once again, and propels it upward in a rising tower, topped by the trademark cauliflower bubbles of the summer cumulus.

If it's not disturbed by wind, hot dry air will cool about ten degrees centigrade for every kilometer that it rises above the earth. This rate of cooling is known to Luke Howard's modern-day colleagues as the Dry Adiabatic Lapse Rate. Hot *damp* air, however, cools in the *Wet* Adiabatic Lapse Rate, only about six degrees per kilometer of height. This four-degree difference in energy — caused by the "latent heat" of the wet air — is known in storm-chasing circles as "the juice."

When bodies of wet and dry air

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

collide along what is known as "the dryline," the juice kicks in with a vengeance, and things can get intense. Every spring, in the High Plains of Texas and Oklahoma, dry air from the center of the continent tackles damp surging warm fronts from the soupy Gulf of Mexico. The sprawling plains that lie beneath the dryline are aptly known as "Tornado Alley."

A gram of condensing water-vapor has about 600 calories of latent heat in it. One cubic meter of hot damp air can carry up to three grams of water vapor. Three grams may not seem like much, but there are plenty of cubic meters in a cumulonimbus thunderhead, which tends to be about ten thousand meters across and can rise eleven thousand meters into the sky, forming an angry, menacing anvil hammered flat across the bottom of the stratosphere.

The resulting high winds, savage downbursts, lashing hail and the occasional city-wrecking tornado can be wonderfully dramatic and quite often fatal. However, in terms of the Earth's total heat-budget, these local cumulonimbus fireworks don't compare in total power to the gentle but truly vast stratus clouds. Stratus tends to be the product of air gently rising across great expanses of the earth, air that is often merely nudged upward, at a few centimeters per second, over a period of hours. Vast weather systems can slowly pump up stratus clouds in huge sheets, layer after layer of flat overcast that sometimes covers a quarter of North America.

Fog is also a stratus cloud, usually created by warm air's contact with the cold night earth. Sometimes a gentle uplift of moving air, oozing up the long slope from the Great Plains to the foot of the Rockies, can produce vast blanketing sheets of ground-level stratus fog that cover entire states.

As it grows older, stratus cloud tends to break up into dapples or billows. The top of the stratus layer cools by radiation into space, while the bottom of the cloud tends to warm by intercepting the radiated heat from the earth. This gentle radiant heat creates a mild, slow turbulence that breaks the solid stratus into thousands of leopard-spots, or with the aid of a little wind, perhaps into long billows and parallel rolls. Thicker, low-lying stratus may not break up enough to show clear sky, but simply become a dispiriting mass of gloomy gray knobs and lumps that can last for days on end, during a quiet winter.

When vapor condenses into droplets, it gives off latent heat and rises. The cooler air from the heights,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

shoved aside by the ascending warm air, tends to fall. If the falling air drags some captured droplets of water with it, those droplets will evaporate on the way down. This makes the downdraft cooler and denser, and speeds its descent. It's "the juice" again, but in reverse. If there's enough of this steam-power set loose, it will create vertically circulating masses of air, or "convection cells."

Downdraft winds are invisible, but they are a vital part of the cloud system. In a patchy summer sky, downdrafts fill the patches between the clouds — downdrafts *are* the patches. They tear droplets from the edges of clouds and consume them.

Most clouds never manage to rain or snow. They simply use the vapor-water cycle as a mechanism to carry and dissipate excess heat, doing the Earth's quiet business of entropy.

Clouds also scour the sky; they are the atmosphere's cleaning agents. A good rain always makes the air seem fresh and clean, but even clouds that never rain can nevertheless clean up billions of dust particles. Tiny droplets carry their dust nuclei with them as they collide with one another inside the cloud, and combine into large drops of water. Even if this drop then evaporates and never falls as rain, the many dust particles inside it will congeal through adhesion into a good-sized speck, which will eventually settle to earth on its own.

For a drop of water to fall successfully to earth, it has to increase in size by about one million times, from the micron width of a damp condensation nucleus, to the hefty three millimeters of an honest raindrop. A raindrop can grow by condensation about to a tenth of a millimeter, but after this scale is reached, condensation alone will no longer do the job, and the drop has to rely on collision and capture.

Warm damp air rising within a typical rainstorm generally moves upward at about a meter per second. Drizzle falls about one centimeter per second and so is carried up with the wind, but as drops grow, their rate of descent increases. Eventually the larger drops are poised in midair, struggling to fall, as tiny droplets are swept up past them and against them. The drop will collide and fuse with some of the droplets in its path, until it grows too large for the draft to support. If it is then caught in a cool downdraft, it may survive to reach the earth as rain. Sometimes the sheer mass of rain can overpower the updraft, through accumulating weight and the cooling power of its own evaporation.

Raindrops can also grow as ice particles at the frigid tops of tall

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

clouds. "Sublimation" is the process of water vapor directly changing from gas to ice. If the air is cold enough, ice crystals grow much faster in saturated air than a water droplet does. An ice crystal in damp supercooled air can grow to raindrop size in only ten minutes. An upper-air snowflake, if it melts during its long descent, falls as rain.

Truly violent updrafts to great heights can create hail. Violent storms can create updrafts as fast as thirty meters a second, fast enough to buoy up the kind of grapefruit-sized hail that sometimes kills livestock and punches holes right through roofs. Some theorists believe that the abnormally fat raindrops, often the first signs of an approaching thundershower, are thin scatterings of thoroughly molten hail.

Rain is generally fatal to a cumulonimbus cloud, causing the vital loss of its "juice." The sharp, clear outlines of its cauliflower top become smudgy and sunken. The bulges flatten, and the crevasses fill in. If there are strong winds at the heights, the top of the cloud can be flattened into an anvil, which, after rain sets in, can be torn apart into the long fibrous streaks of anvil cirrus. The lower part of the cloud subsides and dissolves away with the rain, and the upper part drifts away with the prevailing wind, slowly evaporating into broken ragged fragments, "fractocumulus."

However, if there is juice in plenty elsewhere, then a new storm tower may spring up on the old storm's flank. Systems of storm will therefore often propagate at an angle across the prevailing wind, bubbling up to the right or left edge of an advancing mass of clouds. There may be a whole line of such storms, bursting into life at one end, and collapsing into senescence at the other. The youngest tower, at the far edge of the storm-line, usually has the advantage of the strongest supply of juice, and is therefore often the most violent. Storm-chasers tend to cluster at the storm's trailing edge to keep a wary eye on "Tail-End Charlie."

Because of the energy it carries, water vapor is the most influential trace gas in the atmosphere. It's the only gas in the atmosphere that can vary so drastically, plentiful at some times and places, vanishing at others. Water vapor is also the most dramatic gas, because liquid water, cloud, is the only trace constituent in our atmosphere that we can actually see.

The air is mostly nitrogen — about 78 percent. Oxygen is about 21 percent, argon one percent. The rest

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is neon, helium, krypton, hydrogen, xenon, ozone, and just a bit of methane and carbon dioxide. Carbon dioxide, though vital to plant life, is a vanishingly small 0.03 percent of our atmosphere.

However, thanks to decades of hard work by billions of intelligent and determined human beings, the carbon dioxide in our atmosphere has increased by 20 percent in the last hundred years. During the next fifty years, the level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere will probably double. It's possible that global society might take coherent steps to stop this process. But if this process actually does take place, then we will have about as much chance to influence the subsequent course of events as the late Luke Howard.

Carbon dioxide traps heat. Since clouds are our atmosphere's primary heat-engines, doubling the carbon dioxide will likely do something remarkably interesting to our clouds. Despite the best efforts of whirring supercomputers at global atmospheric models around the world, nobody really knows what this might be. There are so many unknown factors in global climatology that our best speculations on the topic are probably not much more advanced, comparatively speaking, than the bold but mistaken theorizing of Luke Howard.

One thing seems pretty likely, though. Whatever our clouds may do, quite a few of the readers of this column will be around in fifty years to watch them.

ORGANIZE AND PROTECT YOUR COPIES OF
Fantasy&ScienceFiction

Custom-made titled cases and binders, designed to hold a year's issues, provide the storage system to help protect your valuable copies from damage. Reinforced board covered with durable leather-like material in red, title hot-stamped in gold, cases V-notched for easy access, binders have special spring mechanism to hold individual rods which easily snap in.

Cases: 1—$ 7.95
3—$21.95
6—$39.95
Binders: 1—$ 9.95
3—$27.95
6—$52.95

Fantasy & Science Fiction
Jesse Jones Industries, Dept. F&SF
499 East Erie Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19134

Enclosed is $_____ for _____ Cases; _____ Binders. Add $1 per case/binder for postage & handling. Outside USA $2.50 per case/binder (US funds only). PA residents add 6% sales tax.

Print
Name_____

Address_____
No P O Box Numbers Please

City_____

State/Zip_____

CHARGE ORDERS (Minimum $15): Am Ex, Visa, MC, DC accepted. Send card name, #, Exp. date.

CALL TOLL FREE 7 days, 24 hours
1-800-825-6690

SATISFACTION GUARANTEED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Maureen F. McHugh's first novel, China Mountain Zhang, *was a Hugo and Nebula Award nominee, and won the Tiptree Award, the Lambda Literary Award, and the* Locus *Award for Best First Novel. Her second novel,* Half the Day is Night, *is due from Tor in 1994. Her short fiction has appeared in* Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine. *"Virtual Love" marks her first publication in F&SF.*

Virtual Love

By Maureen F. McHugh

THE THING I LIKE BEST ABOUT VR is that you can do anything. Not just the obvious things like murder someone or be an archaeologist in Peru, although that's fun once in a while. But just when you're hanging out, meeting people, you can be anything you want. I have twelve different personas. Some of them, like Lilith and Marty, I don't use very often, but I like to know that they're back there and if I want to be a vamp I can put on Lilith and go to a party, wear midnight blue sequins to show off my fox red hair, drink virtual martinis — did you ever taste a real martini? Jesus! — and sway my virtual hips all I want.

Being good in VR is a talent. When anybody can be anything, the competition for attention can get pretty fierce. Everybody can have a perfect figure, perfect legs, perfect hair, perfect lips, a wardrobe worth hundreds of thousands. You've got to have an edge and the really great thing, see, is that it isn't money and it isn't the genetic hand that mother nature dealt you and it isn't the accidents of fate and disease, it's really all mind. Out there, dressed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as Lilith or Alicia or Terese, it's really pure energy, just the pure flame of a mind burning like an electron candle. Electrons dancing in the light. And who can tell the dancer from the dance?

Well, I can, baby, but *you* can't and that's really the whole point, isn't it?

I have a VR system in my place. It's not the best, it's a seated system, of course. My gloves are second-hand. They're good gloves, British made, DNRs. My helmet, I paid a lot for the helmet, you have no idea what that helmet cost. It's a Mitsubishi, not the most expensive but definitely high end. It's light weight, and that's important to me if I'm going to wear it for any length of time. I put on the gloves and then the helmet and there's this moment before the system kicks on when everything is black inside the visor and there's no sound in my ears and I'm just floating there, suspended in the pre-virtual darkness as if I'm about to be born. Just time to take a breath and then the feed hooks in.

I'm in the dressing room. It's a dingy little green room, like actors use to get ready for a play. I can see the gloves on my hands, ruby red like the slippers in the Wizard of Oz, but there's no face in the mirror which is exactly right because I haven't picked one yet.

Once in a while I go out invisible. It's called lurking. When I was eighteen and I first got full access to all the boards, including the adult boards, I used to do it all the time. For a couple of years I didn't have a body, never talked to anyone. I was just watching, learning the local customs so to speak. I became a connoisseur of people's personas. I could tell when the person was different from the body they'd picked, when they were really just an eighteen-year-old kid who was trying to pass for a thirty-five-year-old Cary Grant. What I really liked was watching someone do it right, so you forgot that they weren't the person they had put on and then there'd be a bit of stage business and I'd think, "ah-hah, I see you." Because that was just what I would have done in their place.

Eventually, I couldn't stand it anymore. That's when I set up the green room. I made Sulia, first. I didn't plan to wear Sulia but I knew she was amazing. Sulia's the most into the moment of my personas. She's tall and she's got cornrows all the way down her brown back in a waterfall of hair. She's muscular and sleek and innocently feral with a beautiful open smile. I'd wear her in the green room for hours, where no one could see me, just being

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

her. Then, when I'd pull the helmet off there would be this moment when I had to remember I was just me. And I hated it.

But I have to be really riding high to wear Sulia. I built her first and she was inspired, but I didn't wear her first.

I started with Terese. Terese is a pale wisp of a thing in a soft, flowered dress, rose and pale green like spring to go with her pale hair. Terese doesn't overpower a room, she works on it like perfume. Terese listens a lot and people confide in her. People will say the most amazing, intimate things if you let them. It was easy to be Terese because one of her traits is that she's still. People think it means that she is calm. I can be very still.

Today I think I'll do Alicia. She's the persona I wear most often anymore.

There are a bunch of things besides makeup on the desk. There's a rose in a bud vase — that's Terese. If I pick up the rose I put on Terese. I pick up a fine gold chain and I am Alicia, a sleek woman with long warm brown hair swept up in a French braid. Almost all my personas have long hair. I worry about that, but my hair is mousy brown and thin and I always wanted long hair even though it would be so much trouble. Still, I am afraid it might become part of a signature. They should all be different, all be individual.

Alicia looks back at me from the mirror, her sun brown arms bare and smooth, her little ivory silk shift simple. That's Alicia, simple and unadorned and direct.

I point with the glove and I'm moving to the door. I open the door and go out into the world.

The access is always a big lobby, with menus posted. I study the menus, skipping the games, *Illuminati, Knights Templar, Cthulu, Voodoo Horsemen, International Spy,* looking for places. *Doc's* is all right, I've been there. *The Black Hole* is fun. *Nightmare* is a dud. *Madame Stael's* is one of my favorites, so I tap the menu, and the elevator door opens. Take a deep breath in the elevator.

The elevator opens and I'm looking down a long room, something like the Hall of Mirrors in Versailles. To the left are windows looking out on a garden, to the right are huge, gilt framed mirrors, and between the mirrors are doors to Salons. I head for the café, three doors down.

"Allô, Alicia," says Paul-Michel, the bartender. "Champagne?"

"A glass of Bordeaux." Paul-Michel is an eliza program. He'll let you pour out your troubles for hours and he always remembers your name. The

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

only problem is that if the sysop is monitoring, she hears your problems, too.

There are half a dozen people in the café; sitting by the window is a guy I've never seen before. He's a nice job, and he looks like he belongs in a French café. He's sitting, either accidentally or on purpose, where the light falls on him like a figure in a Dutch painting. Vermeer. His face is the play of light and shadow, full-lipped and dark eyed and young. The face of an angel.

He's interesting. All the men are handsome, but right now there seems to be a lot of cynical, world-weary, charming matinee idol types running the virtual scene, sometimes it's like everybody shops for faces at the same store. His face doesn't seem made up, as if it might be his real face. Not that it is, of course. But *it seems to be.* That's skill.

He smiles at me, since I'm looking at him, a bit shy. So I take my glass of red wine and sit down across from him. To move, I point my finger and my system moves me through the environment, but the interface is configured so that for anyone watching I just walk. I've programmed different walks for all my personas using a bootleg spline program; Sulia walks like a cheetah, but Alicia has a subtle walk. I like to think she looks as if she might have taken dance when she was younger. I would have liked to have taken dance.

"Hi," he says. "I'm Ian."

"Hi, Ian," I say. "Alicia."

The table top is scarred wood. Outside the day is beautiful, the sky is clear blue and people are out on the Champs Élysées. We can't see the Eiffel Tower from the window, but we could if we were outside.

Usually people ask something like, "Do you come here a lot?" or "Are you local?" meaning is this a local call for you or are you coming through a service. I always lie and say I'm coming through a service. But he doesn't ask, instead he says, "Seems like someone sitting here should be sketching or writing a poem or something."

"Are you an artist?" I ask. But of course, I know he is. Looking at him I can see his work, he is his work.

But he shakes his head. "I like this place," he says. I don't know if he means the Salon, or the café. Or maybe this place in the window. He looks out the window and I look out. A couple is strolling by arm in arm. She is pale and red-haired, the quintessential French girl, and he is dark-skinned, looks like a sailor. They are perfect, simple, uncomplicated. He stops to tie her scarf and for a moment I wish I were her — which is odd, because at this

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

moment I am Alicia, and I am whole and graceful. I am what I wish to be. That couple is not even real, they are window dressing, generated by the sysop, the system operator, whose name is Cassia and who I have spoken to.

I look back and Ian is looking at me. I feel embarrassed, wondering if my feelings were written on my face.

"You are quite beautiful," he says.

My chest constricts, and I feel caught out, naked. What made him say that? "Here," I say, "everyone can be beautiful." I mean it to be nice, a way of saying that it doesn't mean anything, but it comes out sounding disparaging. He blushes.

That's a really nice touch, and I wonder how he does it; my program doesn't include blushing.

"Copies of beauty aren't really beautiful," he says. "They're perfect but all alike."

"What makes real beauty?" I ask, but I already have an idea what he's going to say. Something about originality.

"In real beauty," he says, "there is always something strange, an asymmetry."

Alicia isn't asymmetrical in any way. I made her to be like a dancer. And now he has me thinking of myself as not Alicia. "I'm just not sure I understand you," I say lightly.

He shakes his head. "I don't say things very well."

"Maybe you are a poet." I am trying to smile, trying to make the appropriate noises. Trying to keep things from becoming serious.

"No," he says sharply, abrupt, "I'm not."

Sometimes conversations in the Salon are very strange, suddenly intimate, because it's not oneself that is really talking, or more, it *is* oneself which is really talking, from behind the safety of the mask.

"I haven't seen you in the Salon before," I say.

"I've been lurking," he says. "Ghosting around. I've seen you before. Can I ask you a question?"

I shrug.

"Do you have more than one persona? If I'm out of line, tell me. But there is another woman who comes here and something about her reminds me of you. An older woman in a linen dress, all patterned, with her hair pulled back?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Kristiana. Yes, she's my persona, but of all the personas to link together, Kristiana and Alicia. They're nothing alike; Kristiana is an old wise woman, tall and strong, with her gray-white hair pulled back in a knot tied with an ocher cord. "No," I lie. "No, I'm just me."

He smiles, but he looks perplexed. And I'm thinking, thinking, when was the last time that I wore Kristiana? I don't wear her often. Almost never to the Salon. I am almost tempted to ask if he is sure he saw her at the Salon. I could lie and say I have never seen anyone like that here.

He bites his lips. "There is a quality about her, that you have..."

Like a rabbit in headlights I sit still and listen.

"These people are all alike, but there is something about her. She, she is...beautiful. Like you."

"Thank you," I say. My foolishness, I am glad I can't blush. "Do you know the people here?" I ask, and I start pointing them out, telling him about them. Yellow Eyes and Greg, Lizabeth R. I'm just distracting him. And he smiles and nods and makes the appropriate noises but when I point to someone I can feel his eyes on me.

After a while I say, "I've got to meet some friends on another board, but it was very nice talking with you. Maybe we'll meet again."

"Wait a minute," he says,"how can I get in touch with you?"

"It's a small world," I say, "we'll run into each other again."

Alicia saunters out, but I know I'm fleeing.

BACK IN the green room I pick up the ocher hair tie that puts on Kristiana, grave Kristiana, how is she like Alicia? Kristiana who rarely smiles, who moves slowly — not because she is old but because she is grave and deliberate. Alicia isn't like her at all.

Maybe it is just a coincidence. He is new, he's been ghosting. Or maybe it's a gesture, maybe a slip, something of Alicia crossing over into Kristiana.

I put on Alicia. She is grave, too. I always thought she had a certain dignity, but maybe there is no difference between Alicia's dignity and Kristiana's deliberateness. And maybe Terese's stillness, maybe they are all the same.

No, Sulia is different, and Lilith the vamp with her fox hair, and Stork, who swears like a truck-driver and drinks virtual scotch and plays poker.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Beautiful. He said they were both beautiful. Sulia is beautiful. Even Stork, with her freckles and her broad bones, Stork is not really pretty, but *I* think she is beautiful. They are all beautiful to me.

I take off Alicia and I'm invisible in the mirror. Open the door, ghosting through the lobby to pick *Madame Stael's*, back up the elevator and ghosting, lurking to the café. To watch him, sitting in the light. To see if he can see through other people. To watch him and see through him.

The bartender, Paul-Michel, doesn't look up as I ghost through the closed door.

The chair by the window is empty. He is gone.

And I notice that the light is different, not nearly so hot and white, when he is not sitting there.

He was beautiful, too.

For days and days I am a ghost. I haunt the Salon, I sit in Cairo in white linen under slow ceiling fans, I check all the local places where he might be. Places appropriate to his taste. But how do I know his taste? No one would ever guess that the same woman who is Alicia, who loves the Salon, could also be Stork, who loves the dirty talk of the Black Hole. Or Sulia, who lives in the flash of the Metro. He could be anywhere. Like anything. Maybe he has more than one persona.

Of course he has more than one persona.

So I start to look in all sorts of places.

I find him in the Rathskeller, talking politics. I know him the moment I see him, even though now he is a long-haired radical student wearing a coat out of the French revolution. He is vivid, interesting in the way that the pale copies around him are not. His signature is instant, apparent. It is not in any one thing, this student is as different from Ian as Kristiana is from Alicia, and yet they are both so intense, so original; they have style. He is an artist. He is someone I can talk to, who will understand the things I admire.

I slip back to the lobby, ghost back into the green dressing room — and pause. Who do I have for the Rathskeller? Who can sit in a brick basement and talk politics over the sound of the band?

I pick up a man's bracelet. Marty could go there. Marty looks back at me. Marty is small, neat, a bit natty. "System," I say out loud and do something I almost never do once I have finished a persona and named it; I change Marty.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Instead of his natty suit, I give him a long sharkskin coat, just a bit roughed up. And I give him glasses, the kind you can look over. I raise his temples, take a little of his hair, working fast and knowing if I make a mistake it will take too long to fix, that I might miss *him*. I give Marty a narrow braid tail of hair, a pair of knee boots. He's a mix of eras and styles, scruffy and just right for the Rathskeller. I save him as Mick, and his icon becomes the glasses.

I cross the lobby and the elevator takes forever. He will be gone, I know it. I clump down a Berlin street, seeing myself reflected in the windows, moving wrong, moving in Marty's dapper way despite Mick's heavy boots, but it's too late to fix it. Past the green-haired whores shivering in the cold, calling "Hey Brit," because they think Mick looks British. So I decide maybe I'm a bit Irish, as I'm walking, flying high on adrenaline, improvising like mad, scared and excited.

He is still there. And he doesn't even notice me come in. The white-haired girl with the snake tattoo curling up her skinny arm draws me one of those tall beers, a virtual bier. And I lean on the bar and watch the people and wait for him to notice me, to see if he will.

His eyes slide across me once without recognition. That's okay, I'm patient. I look at the posters, Marlene on the wall in her Blue Angel pose. I glance back from a worker's movement poster and his eyes are on me again — not really looking at me; he is listening to someone else. His eyes wander away. They are radical blue.

And then they come back to me; we are looking at each other.

I have made a mistake. I should have avoided him. His hair is the wild gray-black of a storm cloud, soft and full around his face. He is a master. And he can see through the mask, can see underneath me, read all the insecurities and needs out of which I build my personas.

When he is looking at me, I forget Mick, just like I forgot Alicia. I know myself, a tiny woman in a chair, held in by seat restraints, wearing a VR visor and gloves. A woman who couldn't have a treadmill because she doesn't have a leg to stand on. Flipper babies they call us when we are little, seal babies, and even though I know I should be grateful that I was born with normal arms and hands, I'm not, I'm just not. I want to be normal. He is as beautiful and terrible as an angel, one of the thrones or seraphim, many-eyed, that surround God, and in the heat of his gaze, I feel the mask melt away and I am exposed for what I really am.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I reach up for the visor, because it is the fastest way to leave, because I am going to cry.

"Wait!" he says, interrupting the conversation. "Wait, I know you!"

That is the problem, I think, but I stop.

The chair clatters behind him as he stands — the sysop of the Rathskeller is good, things like that happen here — and he comes to me. "What is your name?" he asks.

"Mick," I say.

He is tall this time, very tall, over six feet I would say. He would be tall even to Sulia, who is the tallest of my personas.

"I've been looking for you," he says. "Ever since you left the French place. I looked on Tu Do Street, from the veranda of the Continental, and left a message for you on the moon."

I was in both of those places, but I was a ghost, so no one ever told me I had any messages.

"Tell me how you get your walk," he said. "Tell me how you make your people so...so, how do I explain it. Not flashy. Not like me, my people are all so obvious, but yours, it took me a while to realize just how good you are. You are more than good, you're...you're an artist. The more I look at you, the more things I see."

I shake my head. It was a mistake to see him, he's cruel without meaning to be, he makes me know the illusion. I should ask him about the white light in the café, the Vermeer light, and about how he blushes. I can't, though.

"I can't talk to you," I say.

"You can't leave," he says. He grabs my hand and I feel his hand through the glove. I jerk away.

"I can't," I say. "It was a mistake." Everybody in the bar is looking at us, but I don't care. When I turn and walk away, he doesn't follow me.

Up the steps and out on the street, past the green-haired hookers shivering in their shorts. I keep watching behind me, to see if he will follow me, but he doesn't, back to the elevator, back to the safety of the green room. Back to sit down in the chair and take off Mick and cry. Sit, invisible, and cry and cry. I don't know what to do.

He has killed it for me. I can't go back out there; what if I run into him again? But what am I going to do if I can't do VR? How am I going to give them all up? How do I spend my days, sitting in my chair, watching the vid, doing

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

my word processing jobs and dumping them into the modem, not talking to anyone for days at a time and waiting for my parents to call to break the monotony? I hate him. I hate what he has done to my life.

You are beautiful, he said. But I knew it wasn't true.

I can't stay away from the green room. I ghost about, start a new personality; a copy, something no one would notice. But I can't stand it, don't want to wear it. There's no magic to it, when I put it on I don't forget. I don't come alive. So I don't bother to save it and I drop out of the system, go watch something on the vid.

But in a little time I'm back again, rattling around in the green room. Nothing to do, no one to talk to. I could find a service, pay membership fees and pay for the minutes of time I use. He is local, like me. I wouldn't see him if I left the local net. But I don't make enough, not to pay my bills, and my home help who comes in to clean. It's too expensive. I need the local boards. Like an addict.

I don't even dare pick up the icons. I don't want a reflection in the mirror. Just the ruby red gloves, dancing around the room.

My system tells me I have a message. Mail.

I've never gotten anything but junk mail before. Nobody knows my system address. It's him, he's a magician. I look all over the green room, ignoring the message flag in the mirror, until I find it, tiny glittering scarab, blue-black beetle, hiding near the door. He must have attached it to me when he took my hand.

Now what? I look at the bug and try to decide what to do. Ignore the message? Accept it and never read it? He'll understand silence, won't he? (But he knows my address. What do I do, pay Ma Bell and change my access line? I'll have to, and that costs money.)

So I accept the message and play it. A screen rolls down in the dressing room, flat, like a window, like the vid. It is pearl gray for a moment, transition time, waiting to be born.

The little man in the wheelchair is all head, head with a sharp, pointed chin and thinning hair and quick eyes. He's not really all head, he has a body, and short stick legs, short muscular arms. Like something out of a Velásquez painting, a dwarf.

"Hi," he says.

It's a recording so I don't have to say anything back.

He twists a bit in his chair. I am very still. I am very good at still.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I'm gambling," he says. "I have this terrible feeling that I'm wrong. But there was this theory about Toulouse-Lautrec, that one of the reasons he could paint his characters so unsparingly was that he wasn't one of them. The other people out on the board, they are all projecting something. But I'm not. I'm not projecting myself at all."

He pauses and wipes one hand over his mouth, his shoulder rolls. I wonder what screwed him up so badly that they couldn't fix his genes? Was he like me? Did the virus that was supposed to fix his genetic material screw up, only make things worse? There aren't very many of us.

"I don't know what makes you different," he says. "Maybe you're just some kind of genius at virtual reality. But I need to talk to you." Plaintively, "There's nobody else out there who would understand, but you do.

"I think this is a mistake," says the recording. "I'm not even sure I'm going to send it. But if I do, and if you want to get in touch with me, leave a message on the moon for Sam. Hell, I don't even know your name. Alicia."

And it ends without a good-bye.

STORK. SHE is the only person I could wear to the moon. Someone strong, and a little brash. She fits when she strides into the Tech Bar, with its windows looking out on the lunar landscape, all stark and blasted. Stork could be a rigger on a lunar station.

He knows me as soon as he sees me. He is still tall (of course, just like I almost always have long hair; it is something he wants so badly he can't keep from putting it in). He stands up from his solitaire game, he's a blue-eyed, red-haired viking in a jump suit; it says "Sam" on the patch.

"Hi, Sam," I say. "I'm Stork. I think maybe your Toulouse-Lautrec theory is right." Not that I really do. I don't think I'm less likely than anyone else to project, any more objective than anyone else. But maybe people like Sam and me, we spend more time. We refine our art. "I want to ask you a bunch of stuff. Like how do you blush?"

Stork is like that, kind of in your face.

He doesn't say anything for a long moment. And then he laughs, a deep, big man belly laugh. I want to know how he does that, too.

"You are beautiful," he says.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Jack McDevitt's third novel, The Engines of God, *will appear later this year from Ace/Berkeley. He has been nominated for the Hugo and Nebula awards, and his novella, "Ships of the Night," won the prestigious international Polytechnical University of Catalunya Novella Award. "Standard Candles" marks his first appearance in* F&SF.

About the story, he writes, "Alternate world stories are endlessly fascinating, whether they wander the corridors of history, or, perhaps more poignantly, play with the possibilities of our own lives.... 'Standard Candles' owes a debt to Dennis Overbye, and his fine history of 20th century cosmology, Lonely Hearts of the Cosmos."

Standard Candles

By Jack McDevitt

THE OBSERVATORY WAS warm in the mist. Light spilled out of the administrative windows on the second floor, and played against the moving trees at the edge of the parking lot.

Carlisle was driving too fast, kicking up gravel, alternately flooring and releasing the pedal. He was impatient with the long uphill climb. The wipers sloshed back and forth, and the branches shut off the sky.

There would be a short staff tonight, because of the overcast. But he didn't care about viewing conditions: the Andromeda galaxy could have been blazing overhead, flooding the mountains with light, and he would not have been more excited.

His printouts had worked their way out of his inside jacket pocket. He pushed them back down, affectionately. The numbers were gorgeous, and they flowed through him, and warmed him. My God, how he loved blue stars.

The road went up and up, and at last he bounced out of the forest and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rolled into the parking lot. He jerked to a stop beside Boddiker's van and was out of the car, not caring about the cold drizzle, not stopping to lock up. He climbed the three concrete stairs at the front of the building, caught his breath, and went inside.

Toni Linden was standing by the coffee machine. He waved the printout at her and said "I've got it — " and kept going.

Lowenthal was not in his office, so Carlisle went hunting for him and found him down in the lower level control room arguing with Boddiker. Boddiker's thin features were in their negative mode, and the little red spot that always showed up on his crinkled skull when he got excited was glowing. His voice was high and he was jabbing his index finger at the Director. Carlisle didn't know what it was about, and didn't care. He did not back out of the room as a respectful young postdoc should have, didn't even wait for them to recognize him, but simply excused himself and shouldered into the conversation. "I think we've got a new standard candle," he said.

Judy had also been part of that night. He'd known her only three weeks, but he had already fallen victim to every familiar romantic symptom: his voice betrayed him in her presence, she completely dominated his thoughts, and the knowledge that she was seeing other men drove him wild. He had even come to accept the improbable notion that a higher power had designed events to bring them together. All he needed to do was find a way to hold onto her.

Even now, fifteen years later, she could jack up his pulse. He'd been right: Judy Bollinger had been worth any effort. Unfortunately, he had only recently come to understand what that really meant.

She had blue eyes that he could never quite see the bottom of. A trim jogger's body. And a smile that was once again troubling his nights. Carlisle, returning to the observatory for the last time, considered the varieties of that resonant gaze.

In their early days, she had worn her auburn hair short. Judy was about average size, but because Carlisle was tall she had to reach for him, and she had a trick of standing on her toes, stretching toward him and holding her mouth up to be kissed, funneling everything she had into her lips.

On that night of nights, when he had so much to celebrate, he had

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hesitated to call her. It was, after all, late on a weekday evening, and he was still treating her carefully, anxious to do nothing that might damage the relationship. Don't be overeager. Patience counts, whether one is measuring the distances between stars. Or pursuing a beautiful woman.

But it was an opportunity to impress her.

He had used the phone in the conference center.

"Hugh?" She sounded pleased to hear his voice, and his spirits soared.

"I'm at Kitchener," he said. "Things are happening." His tone had undoubtedly been self-important.

But she chose not to notice. "What is it?"

"Judy, I've had a major breakthrough. I've found a standard candle."

"Are you sure?" She had sounded delighted, as if she knew what a standard candle was.

"I thought we might celebrate."

"I'm on my way. Wait for me."

And she was gone before he could explain he was thinking about Saturday.

He parked in the slot marked DIRECTOR, got his empty cartons out of the trunk, and paused before letting himself into the building. The mountaintop was still. He had stood out here that night, watching her lights come up the access road. (The road was dark now, cold and untraveled, save for the contractors who came in the daylight to remove everything that was of value.) Her white two-door Ford came out of the trees right there, and she'd parked over by the reserved spaces, under the security lights at the supply entrance.

The security lights were out now. For good. The Foundation had started closing down Kitchener's operations two years ago. Much of the action had gone to the southern hemisphere, where there was less light and pollution and a richer field for investigation. Carlisle supported the action, had even dissuaded Lowenthal from campaigning against the vote.

But it had cost him. Many of his old acquaintances, some whom he'd counted as friends, no longer talked to him. Furthermore, he would be going back to the classroom. His dreams of greatness were probably over.

He unlocked the door, let himself in, and turned the lights on. The well in which the eighty-inch Cassegrain reflector had rested was shadowy and cold.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"How far can you see with it?" she had asked. She was wearing a yellow sweater thrown over her shoulders. Odd that, after so long, he would remember the details.

It was a naive question. "To the edge of the universe," he'd answered. That was not quite true, of course. They could see as far as the Red Limit, which was the farthest point from which light has had time to reach Earth since the creation.

He had supervised the removal of the telescope only the week before. It was on its way to Kitt Peak, where it would become a backup.

Judy had stood beside him, in this doorway, barely rising to his shoulder. But her physical presence had been overpowering.

She taught history at Franklin High School, which was now a shopping center. She knew damned little science, and less cosmology, but she seemed perpetually interested in what Carlisle was doing. Her father was a policeman, and she was a product of public schools and state universities, not blessed with life's advantages as *he* had been. She talked about wanting to write the definitive history of the McCarthy era. Everything hadn't come out yet, she'd said. His links with Hoover. Deals with Nixon. During all the years he knew her, she was gathering materials, and planning the book. Sometimes she read extracts to him. Carlisle, who had always found the social sciences boring, got caught up in the narrative. He was often appalled that government officials could have acted with such perfidy, and she told him more than once that she loved him because he had retained the ability to be outraged. "Don't ever lose it," she warned.

They were watching Boddiker, who was in the observer's cage. "He's our cluster specialist. What they're doing now is hoping the sky will clear. It won't. But if it does, they'll take pictures toward the galactic interior, so they can compare optical results with x-rays. Over there is the imaging center." Babble, babble. He winced now to think of it, but it all seemed to charm her, and she'd squeezed his hand when she thought no one was looking.

Lowenthal was gone a long time. Carlisle wasn't worried: he knew he was right; he had checked his results carefully. So he suggested they go celebrate.

"Isn't that bad luck? Before you get confirmation?"

"Maybe. But in the meantime, I get an evening with *you*. Worth whatever comes of it."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

They took both cars and went down the mountain to Spike's. Spike's was a quiet bar back in the trees off Observatory Road, about a mile from the foot of the mountain. It was favored by the staff at Kitchener and the science department at UEI because management catered to them, hosted their frequent celebrations and parties, and made it a point to treat them like VIP's.

That evening had been their first time there together. They'd found a corner table and ordered drinks and sat in the glow of a small candle in a glass dish. Soft music flowed across the room. Carlisle had realized how little he knew about her, and how fascinated he was by even the trivia of her life. What had she been like in high school? What were her interests? What sort of home life did she come from? *How did she really feel about him?*

It was the happiest night of his life. He was with *her*, a cosmological golden age was approaching, and he was looking forward to his career as a giant. By the end of the century he expected to rank with Hubble and Sandage and Penrose. This was a period utterly unique in the history of the world. A small group of men and women, for the first time properly armed with instrumentation and theory, were trying to make sense of the universe, how big it was, how old, whether the expansion was as precisely balanced as it appeared, and why that should be so. How galaxies formed. Whether strings existed. *Why* there was symmetry. It was a glorious time, and Carlisle was already part of it.

And he intended to make that journey with this magnificent creature at his side.

She had looked at him with undisguised pleasure. *Now*, he understood how easily she was reading him.

I like being with you, her eyes said. But she asked, "What's a standard candle?"

The wax candle burned cheerily on the table top. "If you took twenty of these out of a box, each one would probably put out more or less the same amount of light. So if we saw one on a rooftop, we could figure out how far away it is by measuring how dim the light has become. That's a standard candle. It's a light source that always radiates at the same level of intensity. We call it absolute luminosity. Whenever you see it, you can get a decent range estimate." He stopped and sipped his drink. "Cepheid variables are standard candles. You can always figure out how far they are. But they aren't bright enough. We can only see them on local rooftops. What we need is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

something that's visible in the next town. Or across the country."

"*The blue stars*," she said, almost breathless, as if she'd been running.

"*Yes*. The brightest blue stars in a galaxy always have essentially the *same* absolute magnitude. So we now have an intergalactic yardstick."

"I thought you could already measure distances with red shifts."

"A little bit," he said. "The redder the shift, the further the object. But the method's inexact." He looked at her across the rim of his glass. "They're subject to too many interpretations."

The candle glowed in her eyes. "Congratulations, Hugh."

Later, toward the end of the evening, he called the observatory. "Your numbers seem to work," Lowenthal told him.

Carlisle could still see the telephone, a big old-fashioned rotary wall model; could hear the soft tinkle of a piano solo; could smell warm wax on the still air. Judy sat angled in his direction, watching, her eyes locked on him, waiting for a sign.

"Thanks," he said into the phone.

He looked at her. Thumbs up.

Carlisle had always been something of a Puritan. But that night a different set of universal laws were in place. He bought a round of drinks for a group of strangers at the next table, puzzled them by toasting "candles everywhere," embraced Judy, and threw a twenty-dollar tip onto the table.

They drove to her apartment, Carlisle leading the way. (No sly suggestions about leaving one car in the lot; he would never have been so obvious.) But it hadn't mattered. At her doorway, she had slipped into his arms, and he became intensely aware of the pressure of her left breast. The other was also engaged with him, but Carlisle had found that the sensation was more intimate, more intense, when he concentrated on one at a time.

She had moved against him, subtly, and invited him in, so to speak. And it was over for Carlisle. He remembered her lips, the line of her jaw, her breathing, the sound of the wind in the trees.

She did not draw away. Not then, nor for many years.

Next day, during the late afternoon, Lowenthal called and asked him to come out to Kitchener. The Director's voice was somber, and Carlisle knew there was trouble. Nevertheless, he hadn't pressed; he was adrift in a euphoric state and nothing could shake him. He put the call out of his mind and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

completed his classes for the day. Then, after a deliberately casual meal, he had driven back up the mountain.

"You do seem to be correct," Lowenthal assured him. By then, he had been director at Kitchener more than ten years. He was lean and polished, self-effacing and eminently well-mannered, a rare breed among the pushy egos who dominated the field. "The blue stars work. Unfortunately, we're late. Sandage and Tammann got there first. It's even been published. Damned thing's been on my desk for three days. I saw it this morning."

Carlisle recalled staring out across the mountaintop. And he remembered what Lowenthal had said next, would *always* remember it: "Don't worry. It's bad luck. But you'll be back. You're too good not to be back."

HOW CAN *you sit there and tell me that the universe has no edge?*"

He loved those early evenings, when her mysteries were still new to him, deeper and darker than the spaces between the galaxies. And far more enticing.

They became Friday-night regulars at Spike's, and went to the movies and shows on Saturday. Carlisle floated through his days with a warm sense of well-being, anxious only to get to the weekend.

She invited him to Franklin to address her U.S. history classes on how scientific progress since the turn of the century had influenced the course of events. Since Carlisle wasn't entirely clear on the course of events, he needed help from her. But they pulled it off together, talking about atom bombs and computers and gas engines and the glee with which many of the churches had embraced the Big Bang.

They had met at the Kane Planetarium, where Carlisle had been a part-time lecturer. She'd been at their Star of Bethlehem program, had sat off to his right with a man who'd looked like a football player. After the show, she'd asked a couple of questions, and then drifted away with her companion. He saw her several times after that. She was alone or with girl friends in subsequent visits, and they had always exchanged a few remarks on the presentation. It took a while before he got up the nerve to invite her to dinner.

On the evening after the history class, he had taken another major step forward. She'd been happy with his performance, and he saw a window of opportunity. "Maybe Everett was right," he said, mysteriously.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

She frowned between pieces of beef. "Who's Everett?"

"An astronomer. He suggested there might be a universe for every possibility. A place where every wave function is realized. If an event is possible, somewhere it happens."

That got her attention. "That's science fiction," she said. But he could see that the notion appealed to her.

"It's only an idea." He looked at her, and then blurted the thought that had crossed his mind, even though he knew it was not prudent. That it might scare her off. "If there's anything to it, somewhere out there, you and I are wearing each other's rings."

It was an electric thrust. An uncharacteristically daring move.

She held him in suspense momentarily. And squeezed his hand.

Somewhere out there, you and I are wearing each other's rings.

She said *yes* a few months later, and they went to a little Unitarian church on a Massachusetts hilltop, where the only religious symbol was a stylized carbon atom. Judy's family, who were Catholic, were visibly displeased, and suspected the arrangement had something to do with Carlisle. But it was Judy's idea. Carlisle didn't care, had no strong religious views one way or another, and would have married her in a Fiji Island ceremony if she had asked.

His bride had been so taken by the notion of an infinite number of Judys and Hughs living subtly different lives beyond the stars, *beyond our stars*, she had said, that she wrote the idea into the ceremony: *It may be that there are places where your eyes are gray, or where no one here would recognize my name. But wherever we live, if we have met, I love you. The wave function can break in no other direction.*

They exchanged rings engraved with ∞, the mathematical symbol for infinity.

And if Allan Sandage and Gustav Tammann had beaten him to the blue stars, it didn't matter.

One of the great questions of the era was whether the universe was expanding in a uniform manner in all directions. Or whether the superclusters were so massive that they skewed expansion and created an imbalance. Preliminary results suggested that the Milky Way had been drawn off its

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

natural course, and was falling into the Virgo Supercluster. Was that actually happening? If so, how fast was it moving? Could they devise a method to measure the Virgo effect? Carlisle took charge of the Kitchener team and they began assembling data.

He virtually *moved* into the observatory. Lowenthal encouraged him and made it clear that Carlisle could expect future high-profile assignments. "It's just a matter of time before you make your mark," he said. "I want to be sure you're in a position to take full advantage of the opportunities." And when Carlisle thanked him, the old man grinned. "Establish your reputation," he said. "When you've done that, you can thank me in public."

The issue proved inordinately difficult to settle. It remains unanswered.

He used the cartons to push the door open. There wasn't much left in his office.

He hadn't taken down his pictures. Carlisle standing beside Brent Tully at the Kona Conference, Carlisle shaking hands with John Schwarz at CalTech, Carlisle eating lunch with Allan Sandage in New York. An aerial photo of Kitchener beneath a full moon. A color enhancement of the Horsehead Nebula. A stylized rendering of an H-R diagram.

And of course his favorite picture of Judy, posed against an ominous sky at Cape Hatteras. He had taken it down at the time of the breakup, and then put it back a few months later.

He found old notebooks in the bottom of the lower right-hand desk drawer. They were spiral-bound, yellowed, tattered. Dated from before the arrival of his PC. He slipped off the fat rubber bands, sat on the edge of the desk, and thumbed through them.

They made painful reading: his comments and observations were pedestrian. With the advantage of hindsight, he could see his limitations quite clearly. Hugh Carlisle's prime talent seemed to be recognizing the obvious.

He flipped through his rolodex. He had never purged the thing, and there were names of people who had long since retired or died. And names he couldn't remember. He dropped it into one of his boxes.

During the early years of their marriage, they'd gone to a lot of live theater. In fact, they had seen *George Washington Slept Here* on their second date. Later, Judy would insist that it was his reaction to that romantic comedy

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that had piqued her interest in him.

But their working hours never blended. After he became permanently attached to the observatory staff, he worked primarily at night. He'd get home as Judy was getting ready to leave for school. But they tried to make time for coffee. "What's going on up on the mountain?" she would ask.

"We're counting globular clusters again, but what we'd really like to know—"

"Yes?"

"— Is why the universe is so homogeneous."

"How do you mean?"

"Why is it so balanced? How does it happen that microwaves arrive from opposite sides of the sky, from places that could never, in the entire history of the cosmos, have had any contact with each other, or any influence over each other, *and the microwaves are identical*?"

She loved these vaguely mad notions. "I don't follow. What else *could* the universe look like? Are you suggesting all the stars should be in the southern sky? And nothing in the north?"

It was hard to explain. A lot of it was hard to explain. And it didn't help that, within his own limitations, he didn't quite grasp the finer points that Zeldovich and Steinhardt were making.

He was often too busy, or too tired, to try to lay it out for her. Occasionally, he wondered whether he shouldn't have married a fellow professional. Like Harrigan. Or Cholka. An image of the energetic Russian rose before his eyes. Now *there* was someone he could really have *talked* to.

Judy enjoyed the intimacy of evenings out, together among strangers as she liked to put it. He tried to comply, even though the weight of his own responsibilities increased after he became department chairman, and then assistant to the Director at Kitchener. Nevertheless, he did not complain, and in fact hid his feelings rather well.

He wasn't sure where things had begun to go wrong. Judy understood what drove him, knew he needed to put his name to a discovery, to find a Carlisle Effect, or formulate Carlisle's Theorem. She also understood that it was a compulsion not fostered exclusively by vanity, but by a genuine desire to make a *contribution*, to be at the focal point when they broke through into one of nature's secrets.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But she did not understand that he saw his time running out. It wasn't that he was getting chronologically old, but he knew that talent, genius, if it was present, manifests itself early. He had begun to fear that he was only a mediocrity, someone to hold the reins for Achilles. When he tried to explain, she assured him that everything would be okay. *You're having a brilliant career.* And, *Whatever happens, I love you.*

In time, the emphasis changed. *You're a Type A personality, Hugh. Type A's get ulcers. Die young. You need to take some time off.*

Eventually, she began to spend time with her friends, and they trooped off occasionally for evenings on the town. She always invited him. "If you can make it," she would say. Or, "If you think you might enjoy this —"

And there was Wade Popper, the superstring theorist. Popper made no effort to disguise his interest in Judy. They began meeting out on the jog path. And having lunches together. Only *friends*, her demeanor assured him. But Popper's intentions were transparent.

She had read his discomfort and discontinued the tête-à-tête. The incident left a dead spot, a neutral zone between them, an area that he was never after able to penetrate.

"What does inflation mean?" The subject had come up at about the time of Lowenthal's retirement. The Kitchener team was working full time trying to determine how much dark matter would be required to make inflation theory work. The answer: *a lot.* Maybe ninety percent of all the matter in the universe would have to be dark. And Judy had asked about it during one of his rare evenings at home.

"It means that the universe, in its early expansion, exceeded the speed of light —"

"But that's impossible, right?"

"Not necessarily."

Her eyes flashed. "Sometimes I think you guys just make up the rules as you go along."

"Sometimes we do." It was a little exasperating, like teaching Cosmology 101. She knew just enough to get everything confused. "The trick is to construct an explanation, sometimes any explanation, that fits the observations."

He looked out through his windows, down at the treetops, and tried to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

listen to his own words. What had they sounded like to her?

He lifted the last of his books into a box, sealed it, and put it aside. He took his CD player down off the shelf. The filing cabinet yielded folders filled with papers he hadn't looked at in years.

Gradually, her questions had become less frequent. Conditions at the high school were deteriorating, and she became absorbed in her own problems. But in '86 she was voted Teacher of the Year, and they celebrated with a party at the Radisson.

Carlisle enjoyed parties. The people at Kitchener and in the science department threw them regularly. Threw them, in fact, with such energy that they were barred from the local Holiday Inn.

A substantial crowd showed up for this one. Most of Carlisle's colleagues came. And a small army of Judy's friends. More than he knew she had. There were even a couple of reporters, and a delegation of her students. And although Carlisle was pleased to see his wife get the attention, it hurt to realize that the press had never come for him.

Judy glowed that night. She kept him on her arm, and introduced him to everyone who came within their orbit. She glowed, like in the old days. My husband the cosmologist. And he realized that night that his marriage had undergone some fundamental chemical change.

The evening was still bright and clear in his memory. She had drifted through the celebration, dancing with everyone, laughing, maybe drinking a little too much. Some of the men, some of *his* friends and some of hers, looked at her with such undisguised abandon that he was shocked. Carlisle was not ordinarily a possessive man, and he felt no reason to doubt her, but the sight of all that male interest elicited a twinge even now.

Across the years, her eyes cut him like distant stars.

His old electric razor (which he'd thought lost) was tucked away in the top of a closet. He'd always made a point of looking bright and polished before starting home in the morning. It still worked.

Lowenthal had been wrong. Carlisle never did come back, never again approached a breakthrough. He was a methodical investigator, persistent and precise. He did not make mistakes, but that is a *clerical* virtue. The hard reality was that he lacked the vision of a Zwicky or a Wheeler. He was good on the follow-up effort, performing the detailed analysis to determine

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

whether someone else's brilliance coincided with the way nature really worked. While the long hunt for the value of the Hubble Constant went on, and the debates over cosmic bubbles and macrostructure heated up, Carlisle was always a step behind.

In the spring of 1987, Judy's father died and she received a surprisingly large inheritance. They used some of the money to buy a time-share at Cape Hatteras. The house was big, with broad decks, and ocean views on both sides. It had a fireplace and a jacuzzi, and it was a damned good place to work. One does not need a telescope to do cosmology, he was fond of telling the postdocs. It is essentially an exercise of the imagination. And nowhere else did he feel so free, so *unleashed*, as in the big rug-covered living room, with the fire at his back, and the stars floating on the Atlantic.

Judy preferred to prowl the shops and beaches. One day, she returned with a surprise. "I wanted you to meet Griff," she said. He was average-looking, beginning to gray, a few years older than Carlisle. Dumpy. "He owns the Golden Coin." An antique shop, it turned out.

Carlisle shook the man's hand, and made the appropriate small talk. Good to meet you. Must be considerable business for antiques in a place like this. (Judy had bought a finely-worked tray, which she said dated from the 1920's.) He was congenial enough, but slow-witted.

"Griff says there's a concert tonight. By *Prelude*."

"Who the hell is *Prelude*?" He kept his tone light. Jaunty. He knew she didn't expect recognition from him. It was part of the game they played with each other.

"A string quartet," she said. "Hugh, why don't we go? It would be very nice. It's outdoors."

He would not usually be averse to a string quartet, but he hated to lose one of his few evenings on the Outer Banks. "Sure," he said bleakly. (It occurred to him now, dropping his paper weight and his desk lamp into the packing box, that he would like very much to recapture that night, recapture her, and have it all to do again.)

She had responded as he knew she would, allowed her eyes to close momentarily, had turned to Griff. "I'd better pass."

"Nonsense." Carlisle was aggressively generous. "No reason for you to stay home. Maybe Griff would like to go —"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Fool that I am.

Not that Judy would have been tempted to cheat. But he knew he had sent the wrong message.

HE SEALED THE boxes and carried them one by one down the stairs and out to his car. The wind was picking up and, despite the clear skies, rain was in the air. Lightning flickered to the west. He counted off the seconds until he heard the rumble. Seven miles.

Something about Hatteras had always stirred Carlisle's ambitions. And his discontent. "I need to get away from here," he told her, two years after Griff and his antique shop had passed into oblivion. He was pushed back into a leather armchair, watching sheets of rain pour into the Atlantic. "No, not *here*, but from Kitchener. UEI. It's time to go, to move on."

She was standing near the windows, looking out. Judy *loved* terrible weather. She came alive when the wind blew and the sky rolled, as if the electricity flowed into her. Arms folded, she had been weaving gently to the rhythms of the storm. But he saw her shoulders tighten. "Why?" she asked. "Lowenthal will be retiring soon. You'll be in line for his job."

"I don't *want* his job. Judy, I've been here too long already. I'm getting the wrong kind of reputation. If I'm ever going to break out, I have to do it now."

"You have a *good* reputation." She meant it. And he *did*. He could expect to get the directorship, and possibly even the astronomy chair at the University.

"That's not what I want."

"What *do* you want?" Her voice was soft, but he felt the undercurrent.

"Judy, I'm part of the cleanup crew. Somebody somewhere has a good idea. The superclusters are really pancakes, and they're stacked in layers. Hugh, check it out. The voids between the galaxies are really vast bubbles, and the galaxies are out on the rims. Hugh, what about that? There are people like me in every major observatory in the world. Martin at Palomar. Babcock at McDonald. Leronda at Mauna Kea. Dureyvich at Zelenchukskaya. Flunkies. People who get to bring the coffee while things happen."

She looked at him, and the air thickened. "I'm sorry you feel that way."

How many times had he tried to explain it to her? "Judy, I might be able

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to connect with Schramm at Fermi. They're looking for somebody. I met him last year and I think I made a good impression."

Her eyes clouded. "When would you want to go?"

"The job's open now."

"Hugh, I can't just pick up in the middle of November and walk *out*. I could leave at the end of the year."

The rain slid down the windows. After a while she rose and came over and sat across from him, on the sofa. There had been a time when she would have tried sex, to ease the moment, put the decision off until they had both had time to think. Prevent anyone's position from hardening. But they knew each other too well now.

In the end, she encouraged him to try for what he wanted. He had, but the appointment went elsewhere.

The evening finally came when she asked him to sit down, when her gaze dropped to the carpet and her voice turned especially gentle.

He took it well. Don't make a scene. Don't embarrass yourself. He understood quite suddenly, quite painfully, that he did not want to lose her, and that to react badly was to throw away whatever chance he might have. He was wrong, of course. But the moment passed, fled, was long gone before he realized his mistake.

He dropped the last box into his trunk, banged it shut, and went back inside to turn off the lights.

The universe was *filled* with light: whole squadrons of suns nearby, creamy galactic swirls floating beyond the Local Group, flickering pinpoints deep in the abyss. From the time Hubble discovered, in 1923, that there were other galaxies beyond the Milky Way, that there appeared to be no end to them, astronomers had argued over distances and measurements.

Something more than Carlisle's blue stars was needed. Something on a qualitatively different scale.

And while he and a host of others thought it over, Sandage and Tammann proposed the Type I supernova. It was visible at enormous range, and it had a reasonably consistent absolute luminosity. The downside was that you had to find one. But it was a method with promise.

Now that someone else had thought of it, it seemed obvious. Carlisle sighed.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He stared at the empty well that had housed the Cassegrain, and could almost feel her standing beside him.

Her departure was followed quickly by divorce papers. She assured him she would harbor no bitterness, and she did indeed look unhappy. But she rejected his last minute attempt to salvage the marriage. He was stunned. Carlisle had believed that, when the moment came, she would draw back.

He reacted by throwing himself into a new project. Teams from several research centers were making a coordinated effort to map a sixty-degree wedge of the universe, out to about three hundred million light years. That target area would later be extended, but Carlisle set up and personally led the Kitchener group.

During that period, while he categorized galaxies, and recorded their positions, he waited for her to come back. The long days passed, and he gradually adjusted to his new existence. She was after all not the only woman in the world.

Meanwhile, the various teams involved in the mapping project were counting more galaxies than theory allowed. By a factor of two or three. On a cold February night in 1990 he had poured himself some hot chocolate, and sat down with his assistants. They'd gone over all the models, and could not explain their results.

Why?

Construct an explanation, any explanation, that fits the observations.

Easy to say.

He threw the switches, and the building went dark. There must have been a time when he should have seen what was happening, when he could still have acted before they were flung apart like bodies with reversed gravities. God help him, but even now, with the benefit of all this hindsight, he did not know what he could have done differently.

He stepped out into the moonlight, closed the door behind him, and locked it. The metal felt hard and cold.

The wind blew across the mountaintop. Carlisle started down the steps when he noticed that a black car had pulled in behind his. He stared, trying to see who was in it. A couple of kids, maybe. Planning to park.

The driver's door was open. The interior light blinked on, and Judy stood before him.

She was radiant. Lovely. But visibly reluctant.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Hello, Hugh."

She came around to the front of his car and stopped. Hope rose in Carlisle's breast. And resentment. And a flood of other emotions. "Judy," he said, "what are you doing here? How did you know I'd be here?"

She smiled. "Last day before they shut it down. Where else would Hugh Carlisle be?"

He stared at her. "I'd given up on you."

"As well you should." She glanced at the observatory. "It hurts to see it like this. That surprises you, doesn't it?"

"Yes," he said. "I thought you'd come to resent it."

"It was part of *you*. Part of us." She shrugged. "I'm sorry to see it go."

"I'm glad you came."

"Thanks. So am I. But don't get the wrong idea. I just wanted to be here. At the end."

His voice had grown thick. He thought about the infinity symbol on his ring. (He'd stopped wearing it about three years before she left, because he'd gained weight and it no longer fit.)

"Spike's has closed down too. But I'd like to buy you a drink. Somewhere."

She pursed her lips. And smiled again. "I'd like that."

Somewhere every possibility occurs. He might indeed be one of a near-infinite number of Hugh Carlisles. And most of them were standing alone in this parking lot.

But Carlisle was in the right universe.

The stars were warm and bright and went on forever.

❄ New F&SF T-Shirts ❄

We have a limited quantity of brand-new, 100% cotton T-Shirts. They are white, with a full color reproduction of the October/November 1993 cover by Tom Canty. Only available in large, X-large and XX-large. $12.00 each, plus $1.50 postage and handling. Mail your payment to:

Fantasy & SF, 143 Cream Hill, West Cornwall, CT 06796

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

L. Timmel Duchamp's "When Joy Came to the World" is the first of many appearances she will make in the pages of F&SF. *She received quite a bit of notice a few years ago for her short story, "The Forbidden Words of Margaret A." which appeared in* Pulphouse: The Hardback Magazine. *She has sold short fiction to other anthologies, including Bantam's* Full Spectrum *series.*

"When Joy Came to the World" is an unusual futuristic story told through a standard literary device — the epistle. Only in this case, the letters are sent via electronic mail, which has, for some, already become the communication device of the present.

When Joy Came To The World

By L. Timmel Duchamp

14 February, 2147

To: The Respected Narratologist, Elihannu 09
Dear Respected Narratologist:

CONCERNING YOUR REquest in *The Continuing Times Book Review* for well-documented, firsthand, openly subjective eve-of-war accounts: I believe the materials here appended meet your requirements. They have been in our family-group since its formation, and originated from a descendant of one of our family-group's founders. I should explain that every one of the documents consists, materially speaking, of a laminated (paper) photocopy of a text laser-printed on paper. The text, by its own account, was transmitted from Florence, Italy, to Seattle, Washington, via "e-mail" [i.e., *electronic mail*], which is to say as digitized data over fiber-optic telephone lines (which, this generalist suspects, included at least one satellite relay), via

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

an existing data network ("Universnet") that I believe served to link university workers throughout most of the world. No doubt you are more familiar with these technological terms than I, a mere generalist.

Because of their age and provenance, our family-group has taken great care to maintain these documents. I am sure you can understand that we do not care to part with the objects themselves. If you need to handle them physically, yourself, to verify their authenticity, or require further information you think we might unwittingly possess, please do not hesitate to message me.

Yours respectfully (etc.),

Gendron 14.

From Loreau@hist.Firenze.Universnet//23:23GMT190919
Received Baring@chem.UWASH.Universnet//15:28PDT190919

To: Nicholas Baring
From: Denise Loreau
Re: Personal & Private

September 19, 2019
Thursday, 10:45 p.m.

Listen to this, Nick. As I've told you, my desk is set up so that I can look out on the Arno while I work. Usually at night I bring the computer to bed with me & work from there (lazy bed-loving creature that I am, right?). But tonight, no way. It's just too fucking weird. (Keep using that word to myself, WEIRD, right? But it is!!!!) Okay, here's the scope, which I imagine will make the regular Evening News over there (that being how WEIRD it is): It's snowing! It's eighty-odd Fahrenheit degrees (or so I figure: you know they only give you centigrade here, & though I've mastered most of the metric stuff, temp is still somehow beyond my patience), & it's snowing! Now you & I know it can't be snow. & in fact if I've translated the radio broadcast correctly, no one believes it's snow, & government officials are warning people not to touch it

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in case it's something toxic.

The Iversons — you know, the Canadians in the big apartment next door — well, most of the last half hour I spent sipping brandy with them (which is what I was doing before I sat down here & logged on), well anyway, the Iversons kept chattering about how ordinary dumb-shit "citizens" let their children play in fallout in Nevada & Utah during atomic testing there — & called it "snow."

What a circus! You should see the crowds lining both sides of the Ponte Vespucci & packed along the Lungarno Vespucci & the street on the other side of the Arno (the name of which I forget)! There must be a dozen thick on either side. & they've got carabinieri down there, threatening people with stun-guns, to keep them up on the sidewalk. & needless to say the carabinieri, having to answer to government officials, are to a person dressed in full contamination-avoidance suits, including respirators!

Apologies for my idiocy, Nick, but I've just realized that I haven't told you that it's only snowing OVER THE ARNO. (What a lousy reporter I'd make! I can just hear you telling me what an airhead I am.) Okay, let me try to be more orderly about this. (But I *have* had quite a bit of brandy with the Iversons. & that on top of the usual vino with dinner.) 1) According to official reports of the Ministry of Science broadcast over radio & TV, it started snowing on the Arno at approximately 2030. 2) I heard a lot of yelling & screaming at around 2145. (At which time I was just finishing my meal of tortellini in red sauce, bread, salad & vino.) 3) I went to the window, & saw hordes of people descending to the banks of the Arno. 4) I rushed over to the Iversons', & watched from their windows as people lined the bridge (which is, after all, the best vantage point of all). I noted that though I could see snow falling over the Arno, it never fell on the bridge itself — which really, I tell you, is damned freaky. (& if you think about it, is even freakier than some snow-like substance falling in this kind of heat.) The "snow" itself LOOKS like real snow, from this distance — which is to say that it looks just as it does when you look out a window in Seattle & watch snow falling by street light. Same thing here, by the lights of the bridge, by the street lights running along this side of the embankment, & by the sodium lights that always illuminate the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mini-dam below. As I write I can see fat white flakes pouring down in the lights, with the darkish sky as backdrop. Plus there are areas where some of the flashing blue police lights cut rhythmic swathes into the snow, giving it a spooky blue tint. I suppose only the blasts of megaphone noise, presumably the police issuing warnings, keeps it from being too eerie.... As I said, it's a total circus out there. But a surreal circus — because, I suppose, of the backdrop including the Romanesque rear of Santa Maria del Carmine & the lighted spire of Santo Spirito distantly thrusting up over all.

Twenty-five minutes later —

Just took a quick break — because the Iversons knocked on my door to let me know they're saying on television (the Iversons, of course, have a set in their apartment, & watch it besides) that this weird unidentified "snow" is falling in other rivers, too. So far it's been reported to be falling in the Tiber, the Rhine, the Seine, The Thames, & the Nile. The Iversons, in relaying this to me, wondered how long before all news of this phenomenon is censored. They think it's ominous. In fact Donald wonders if it's not the intentional or accidental deployment of or side-effect from the testing of some superclandestine chemical weapon. While Caroline, of course, goes with a pollution-effect theory — as she ALWAYS attributes every negative thing that happens to one kind of pollution or another...

I'm going nuts sitting here, watching. Think I'll go next door & join the Iversons 'round the old family hearth, & listen to the "experts"' gobbleydegook (in Italian, yet — unless some of the English cable stations start picking up the story). I suppose, given the highly censored state of the news outside the U.S., you'll probably hear what this "snow" is before I do. But just in case the networks don't consider this an important story, I'll keep you posted (& will count on you doing the same for me, too).

Oh how I wish you were here, love — especially now. But I suppose if you were you'd probably be out there, trying to scope out the situation for yourself. (But they're wild out there, you know. With the crowd getting thicker by the moment, & the helicopters sweeping the area so thick in the sky I wonder we haven't had a crash yet. I'm glad we've got good heavy locks

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

on our foot-thick wooden doors downstairs. I'm sure not a few people have gotten the idea that these windows would be great observation posts.)

More later —

Denny

EOT

From Loreau@hist.Firenze.Universnet//07:50GMT200919
Received Baring@chem.UWASH.Universnet//23:55PDT190919

To: Nicholas Baring
From: Denise Loreau
Re: Personal & Private

20 September, 2019
Friday, 7:30 a.m.

But Nick, that's completely wrong! I assure you!!! The snowfall was not, repeat was NOT a "mass hallucination"! It's over, true, & no one knows what it was that snowed (except that it wasn't water-based precipitation). But the newscasters on a French cable station were claiming last night (before they clamped down on public reporting on the subject) that "scientists" had taken samples of the "snow" falling over the Loire, the Seine, and the Elbe Rivers, respectively. You don't really believe they could have taken samples of something that wasn't there, do you? It's true we've heard nothing concrete since then, but I find it exceedingly significant that carabinieri continue to guard the banks of the Arno — & in full contamination-avoidance gear, no less!

I realize that's not much to go on, but I tell you I saw it with my own eyes. Albeit at a removed distance. & I know I wasn't hysterical or wishing for winter or any such thing at the time. Now if I were a neo-Joachimist, you might legitimately wonder. But watching, at a distance from both crowd &

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

scene, what possible mechanism could be operating that could make ME — & the Iversons as well — hallucinate? Really, Nick! They caught this so-called "hallucination" on videotape — I know, because last night they were showing shots of the snow over the Tiber & Seine & Thames — before the newscasters dropped the story altogether, which was at about 12:45.

If you hear anything else, please let me know. I'll do the same from this end. But now I've got to gulp the rest of my caffe & log out — the Archivio opens just one hour from now, & it takes me about 20 minutes of brisk walking to get there.

Love,

Denny

EOT

From Loreau@hist.Firenze.Universnet//14:53GMT200919
Received Baring@chem.UWASH.Universnet//07:00PDT200919

To: Nicholas Baring
From: Denise Loreau
Re: Personal & Private

Friday afternoon

Hah. I swear I don't know how Florence has gotten into the twenty-first century. Yes, I know, Europe has a bit of a stretch on us in general, but somehow they haven't allowed any of that famous progress entree into the Archivio di Stato, which might as well be accessible only through a time-machine catapulting one back into the middle ages. Yes, yes, I know you've heard this song before, but let me tell you, after what happened this morning I could easily sing a good fifteen new verses of it.

First, I arrived at the Archivio at eight-fifteen sharp, in time to queue up with three other Eager Beavers for the opening. I had some stuff I wanted to order

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

before nine-thirty, & was itching to get at the Esecutore filza I hoped would (finally) be awaiting me in the Deposito. I said my Buon Giornos to the other three, they said theirs to me. & then we waited. & waited. & waited. Until it was after nine-thirty & there was a crowd of about two dozen or so of us waiting for the doors to the Sala to open. The foreign scholars (including me) were hard-put to refrain from complaining about the arbitrary ways of Italians, let me tell you. We did, however, theorize on the possible reasons for the delay (except that we almost instantly got facetious in our speculations). The fact that civil service workers in Italy get away with murder, and all employees of the Archivio di Stato are civil service, naturally played a leading role in our theorizing. (The juxtaposition of old and neomodern in Europe continually blows me away, Nick. The contradictions baffle me. About how Europe can be so stunningly prosperous yet its businesses and governments terrorized by unions, exceeds the grasp of a rational mind.)

At about ten o'clock the doors opened, and the infamous Dragon Lady, Palla herself, appeared. (Or so I gather from what some of the older scholars said — I myself had never seen this legendary figure, only heard about how she used to preside over the Sala before getting promoted upstairs, and of course about how she "modernized" the place — by which I always assume people mean that she dragged the Archivio kicking & screaming into the 19th century around the turn into the 21st!) At any rate, if the old-timers say it was Palla, that's good enough for me. Certainly she didn't look old enough to have been presiding over the Sala in the days of my own advisor's (and his advisor's before him) graduate studenthood. I was fascinated to note that she was wearing some of the designer paper fashions so popular here in Europe. Not the super-expensive kind the Glams wear (which tends to be made of handmade papers and be hand-painted and extravagantly adorned with the more expensive bric-a-brac), but a relatively simple affair, boasting lots of pleats & a tall ruff standing up around her face & the wildest of sleeves (features that would never work with cloth), & adorned with a few flat round mirrors about two centimeters or so in diameter, & glitter & spun sugar sculptures & who knows what else. (Believe me, Nick. I know already you're thinking it's impossible that ordinary middle class Euros wear paper clothing, but I'm not making it up, & I know damned well Palla's no Glam. They swear around here that paper fashions are both ecologically sound (they get recycled

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

at once) & economically desirable for being so ephemeral, & thus keep people both amused & employed (but note that the Euros consider a twenty-five hour work week with an entire month off in the summer "full employment"!). Actually, I heard some people talking about this at a party last week, grousing about how "grim" Americans are, about how we don't appreciate the significance of aesthetics (& that if we did we wouldn't live in our "Great Big Gulag"), & about how we've made it impossible for such "lovelies" as paper fashions to be enjoyed there, since a person visiting the U.S. would never dare wear something so easily vulnerable to attack! I can tell you my face was red, I was so pissed I wanted to go over to these so-superior smug creeps — one Brit, a Swiss and two Florentines — & (besides punching them out!) tell them just how wrong they were to believe such arrant nonsense. But I didn't — because I just *knew* they'd turn their noses up at me for being so "rude" as to interrupt their private conversation — as though one could ever not eavesdrop at a party!)

Damn, I've gotten off the subject. Sorry, love. Though I've never been a superpatriotic type, life here (even if it's only been three weeks so far!) is enough to make a person into one via the crucible of reaction-formation. But anyway. Palla appears, graciously greets us, & then announces that the Archivio will be closed for the morning session, but may — MAY! — be open for the afternoon session! An old Florentine gent (who specializes in the cultural history of the late Duchy) fortunately piped up to ask why. (Given Palla's reputation for icy putdowns, I doubt anyone else would have had the nerve.) "The snow," she replied. "There are difficulties because of the snow." Now have you EVER heard anything so ridiculous? What possible "difficulties" could there be? But of course we all just meekly bowed our heads & accepted the inevitable. So off I went for a cappuccino & panini with my usual crowd of scholars, a mixed bunch of nationalities... & did we talk about the "snow"? No, of course we did not. I was the only who even saw it. & the others happened not to be watching television at the time. We discussed, instead, our research projects (plus some gossip about an art historian who instead of drinking caffe with us went shopping for a paper blouse "like Palla's").

After caffe I went to Santa Croce to look at Ciambue's amazing frescos. &

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

then I came home, & wrote up the notes I took on them, & then Lynette arrived for lunch & her run. Let me tell you, the story I got from her was something else.

To start, I don't know if I told you about Lynette's living in the suburbs? (I keep thinking lucky me, lucky the Iversons, for having such a charitable landlady — & North American — & for the connections that allowed me to rent from her in the first place.) I haven't been able to bring myself to go out there yet to Lynette's place. (God knows there's no other reason for doing so — I keep imagining what it must be like living in one of those gigantic concrete blocks, & having the commute past the security screening point to manage every damned day. Just thinking about which now reminds me of Palla's feeling secure enough to walk the streets of the Centro wearing a paper blouse! Damned smug Florentines!) Anyway, Lynette lives in the midst of workers, mostly Italian (from a variety of city-states) lower middle class. (Don't get the idea they're poor, no! They've all got every gadget on the Euro market, be sure about that, even their toilets & bidets are those "automatic" Japanese jobs for people too lazy to wipe their own asses). Few people out there speak English, so she's really on her mettle, all the time.

Well it seems this morning when Lynette left her little efficiency, a number of them — three young men & one young woman — gave her some bad (verbal) grief. About, of all things, the "snow"! Can you believe it? She said they backed her up against the elevator wall & gave her a lecture on how terrible it was that such a barbarically savage country had been able to "wreck the entire earth" with its immature ways, all because of its "vast mercenary military machine"... But I've told you some of the attitudes I've been catching since Day One here — I don't need to go into further detail. It seems the people in Lynette's apartment block believe the "snow" to be either a) environmental fallout (caused, of course, by U.S. military or industrial pollution); b) a new military move by the U.S., against Europe, i.e., more "power plays by the resentful inferior" (not the words they used to Lynette, but language commonly used by Florentine students); or c) the accidental loss of control of a chemical weapon — again, belonging to the U.S. (of course!). Lynette says that once she got away from them & out onto the street it got worse — namely, she had to listen to these people riding the bus with her

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

theorize about what terrible thing the Americani had done now, that it should snow in the Arno in September — wet sticky snow, some of them claimed it was. (You know how easily rumors can propagate.) Oh, & as if that weren't enough, it seems many of the people here are claiming that the reason the networks blacked out coverage on the news is that the stations broadcasting the news are all owned by multinational corporations, which we all know that the American government, being so bellicose, can make do whatever they want, & so the Americans naturally wanted news of this new atrocity quashed... As I remarked to Lynette when she told me all this, if the American government had all that much influence over the multinationals, you'd think our economy would be a hell of a lot stronger than it is. (But then the Euros, who have a political opinion about everything, don't go in for logic much, do they.) I know I'm starting to sound like one of those political ranters, but I just have to add something else. Remember, my telling you the first week I got here, about how some anti-American Euro politicians were going on & on about that mob of women breaking into that warehouse in Arkansas last year, to seize a shipment of recombinant virus used for wiping breast cancers? Well if you'll remember, one side of the argument was that the U.S. public is so arrogant & illiterate that the average Joe on the street thinks that just because a company has production operations on American soil that it somehow belongs to Americans. Which argument then led to the ridiculous contention that Americans don't distinguish between what in business is American & what is not — that as far as the American public is concerned, everything in the world belongs to the U.S. (& of course they then trot out the old litany of Iraq, Colombia, etc.) My point is that these same people want to have it both ways — want to claim Americans don't know the difference, then themselves turn around & imagine the U.S. government can dictate to multinationals for its own purposes. The depressing thing is that the other side of their "argument" is even worse, namely the charge that our social policies are "genocidal" because we insist that food, shelter & medical care be earned, rather than freebie "rights." Listening to people talk about these things makes me feel as though I've gone through the looking-glass, where everything is backwards, & where backwards is accepted as "normal."

I don't know, Nick — if this is what life is going to be like here — shit, listening to all my advisor's old stories about how lovely it is here... about the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

richness of life, the endless diversity & tolerance... It's not as though I'm not instantly identifiable as from the other side of the Atlantic, either — I mean, I just can't afford the clothes they wear here. So I'm branded everywhere I go as from "over there" (the only question being which country "over there" — except when I open my mouth they instantly know it's a northern one, since I never have been able to roll my R's properly).

Going to drip myself a strong cup of coffee before getting my things together & making another run on the Archivio. If there's an afternoon session, it'll be starting half an hour from now. (Not so important to be there on the dot in the afternoon, since any order I put in won't be in evidence until Monday at the earliest.) Hope your day goes better than mine so far has.

Love,

Denny

EOT

From Loreau@hist.Firenze.Universnet//23:10GMT200919
Received Baring@chem.UWASH.Universnet//15:20PDT200919

To: Nicholas Baring
From: Denise Loreau
Re: Personal & Private

Friday night

Nick —

Sorry you're having such a rush before classes start. Don't worry, I won't be expecting much from you for the next couple of weeks (just so you keep the little notes coming — frequency rather than length is what matters most to me, you know — just to know you're there, & listening to my babble [or should I say READING my notes]).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Sala was open this afternoon, by the way (though the Deposito comic book readers were positively SURLY to me, & I kept thinking the walkers were specially focused on me, as though POSITIVE I'd be whipping out a pen & using it, or a razor blade to clip out a page or two). I got a solid three hours in, poring over ye olde notary's wretched hand (probably cramped from hours of taking down testimony), which didn't have too many abbreviations I couldn't figure out.

Well I must say I'm glad you're going to take my word for what I saw — it bothered me considerably, as you might imagine, to think you thought I was hysterical. If you can get some solid info, that'd be super. It's the strangest thing — knowing it's probably nothing, but being driven by curiosity, just because I saw it with my own eyes. (Lynette, on the other hand, I'm sure because she didn't, has little curiosity about it at all: & in fact if I hadn't made it plain to her that I'd seen it, I think she'd be going with the mass hallucination theory, too — for which one would hardly be able to blame her, given the way those people harassed her about it this morning in the elevator in her block.)

Guess I'll read a little, & then get an early night. Didn't get much sleep last night, & am anxious to be at the Archivio when the Sala opens in the morning.

Denny

EOT

From Loreau@hist.Firenze.Universnet//21:50GMT210919
Received Baring@chem.UWASH.Universnet//13:54PDT200919

To: Nicholas Baring
From: Denise Loreau
Re: Personal & Private

Saturday Evening

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dear Nick,

What a day it's been. Still, it was nice finding your note when I got home, especially with such tantalizing tidbits to thicken the "Snow" plot.

Had three invitations today. First, Blake Steubner (I don't think I've mentioned her to you yet) asked me to lunch at Villa I Tatti next Thursday. She's an art historian, & a fellow there. (Which is why she can ask me to lunch.) Of course I accepted, it would have been unthinkable not to. I'm sure I've told you about I Tatti — how it was left to Harvard by the famous art historian Bernard Berenson, last century, & how it's crammed to the rafters with the most fabulous art. There's a huge chunk of land it sits on, where grapes & olives are cultivated. & they have very formal la-di-da lunches there every weekday, attended by a mix of scholars & Florentine notables (judges, gynecologists, Catholic religious, corporate executives, you know the sort).

Second invitation came at the closing of the Saturday session of the Sala — three art historians — all Americans — & two Florentine graduate students (in history) asked me out to lunch with them. I felt so embarrassed — about turning them down, I mean — but one lunch out like that would have wiped out my cappuccino fund for the month. I hope I didn't sound too lame, saying I had Lynette coming over. (It's possible they know Lynette hangs out at my place on weekdays during the hours between sessions, keeps food in my refrigerator, showers there after her run...) She usually doesn't come on Saturdays, but had told me she was going to today, because she said she was feeling uncomfortable about running in her neighborhood, given the hostility people there have been directing at her.

The third invitation came when I got home (my string bag full of warm bread, tomatoes & flimsy-thin slices of mortadella), from the Iversons — actually, it was an invitation to both Lynette & me — to go with them to visit an old medieval town that the Consiglio di Firenze has (forcibly) kept intact. Needless to say the language of the statute preventing development (which, by the way, is publicly posted) resounds with reference to the need for preserving "Our Great Heritage of Antiquities" (or something to that effect), but the truth is the Florentines have done so well by tourism that it is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

unthinkable to them that developers be allowed to tamper with anything so old & therefore attractive to tourists.

So Lynette & I hopped into the Iversons' van, & the eight of us drove south out of Florence & thence through the miles & miles of concrete blocks. It's depressing, really. That & the usual light industry sprawl.... But there are still rural patches in Tuscany, with lushly silver olive trees & tall dark pointy cypress sharp against the thick blue sky. The town has a sort of cordon sanitaire around it — like a little fringe of green space, as though that would protect it from its suburb — & then there are massive stone ruins from the time of the Romans, & old old buildings that give off a smell you'd swear was a thousand years old, massive piles of brick & stone pressed tightly against one another, towering over narrow streets of old rough paving stones. It's funny, you could see oil stains on the paving stones, so you knew they once allowed motor vehicles inside the town, but of course they no longer do, so there was this dank muffled stillness, occasionally pierced by the sound of a man & two women quarreling. I even saw some laundry hanging out on a line strung between two buildings — red & white diagonally striped sheets, black & purple polka-dotted boxer shorts, a black brassiere & dress, & a white linen tablecloth & napkins. (Do you suppose the Florentines have made such disregard for the antiquities illegal? I wouldn't put it past them. & if they haven't, certainly if anyone who's anyone ever catches sight of such lower class domesticity, they will.) I thought the laundry sort of amusing, but almost threw up at the smell of meat roasting mixed with the stench of urine & the scent of moldering old stone positively PERVADING the place from one end of the town to the other. The people there (besides the tourists, I mean) lacked the look of prosperity one expects in Europe. Imagine the sight of an old woman standing across from a church, wrapped in black from head to toe, only a bit of her face showing — a mass of wrinkles, a great bulb of a nose, a few strands of gray hair straggling out of her head covering, her two black beads of eyes fixed on the door to the church so fanatically I doubt she even saw us. Sensing high drama in progress, I wanted to stop, to investigate. But of course I did not. I doubt the others even noticed her. Certainly Caroline was anxious to get on to the next item in her Blue Guide...

The dreary necessity of going through the security screen on re-entering the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Centro was more than usually unendurable. Because the Iversons had dropped Lynette off at her place before we even entered the Centro, it was just me they invited for supper. I was of two minds about accepting. On the one hand, it was already seven-thirty & I was tired & hungry & interested in getting into my night sweats & curling up with my e-notebook in bed & entering a description of the town in my journal. Also, I'm not sure how friendly I want to get with the Iversons — since they do, after all, share certain amenities with me. (And Donald & Caroline, though they don't quarrel, vie constantly for my attention — which situation, as you can imagine, gets old fast.) (Donald, of course, as a Dean of his college, is used to having his every word fawned over & analyzed. I can understand it in him. In Caroline, I suppose, it's simply long deprivation.) On the other hand, I was pretty wound up, & was finding their company enjoyable. Anyway, I did accept. I have to say their apartment is wonderful — their dining room looks out over the Arno, you know. But not only is their apartment larger, everything is even nicer than in mine. So they gave me wine, & soup & pasta & bread & salad & cheese... & their kids chattered about the "snow" & what the kids in their school were saying about it.

But speaking of "snow" — I'm FASCINATED to hear that so many science-types have reported seeing the "snow" falling into the rivers, creeks and lakes of Western Europe & Northern Africa. & I'm excited to hear that some of them got samples. It's disappointing that that SCIENCE reporter hasn't returned your call yet. You're right, Nick, she does owe you one for all the help you gave her explaining that Nobelist's work. But then it is the weekend. Presumably she'll get back to you on Monday.

I do think it's "curious" as you say that the weather sat was damaged at roughly the same time as the "snow" started falling. It may be a "totally wild conjecture" that some sort of meteor is involved, but at this point, Nick, it's the ONLY conjecture I've heard (besides anti-American nonsense about the Evil U.S. Government). (& don't worry, I won't breathe a word of it to anybody — I do understand what you mean by "wild conjecture," you know.) Of course, the weirdest thing — even if we can assume the "snow" came from the meteor — is its falling only over water. But I suppose to explain that you'd need an even wilder conjecture...

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Thank god for ScienceNet. No doubt when the people who took samples finish their analyses they'll put their conclusions out on the Net. But I'm too tired to write any more. It's bedtime for this little bunny.

Love love love love (if only we could TOUCH!) —

Denny

EOT

From Loreau@hist.Firenze.Universnet//11:40GMT220919
Received Baring@chem.UWASH.Universnet//03:52PDT220919

To: Nicholas Baring
From: Denise Loreau
Re: Personal & Private

22 September, 2019
Sunday morning

Nick —

Just spending a quiet day at home. Been invited to Sunday supper at Chrissy Fowler's, will probably go. (Funny how solitary I am at home, but here accept almost every invitation that I can afford: especially on the weekends. Living abroad certainly does demonstrate to one just how much a social creature one really is, & how dependent one is on community members for maintaining comfortable assumptions — which the Florentines are always undermining.)

The temptation to telephone is almost overwhelming. It's often powerful, but this morning is fierce — because I keep thinking of how — when I'm home — we invariably get the newspapers & hang out in the Grand Illusion for the whole of a Sunday morning. Presumably at this hour you're sleeping... so you'd sound very very sleepy if I called now & woke you... which, needless to say, I'm not going to do.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Keep the e-mail coming, love.

Denny

EOT

From Loreau@hist.Firenze.Universnet//23:20GMT230919
Received Baring@chem.UWASH.Universnet//15:52PDT230919

To: Nicholas Baring
From: Denise Loreau
Re: Personal & Private

Monday night

Nick —

Interesting, that SCIENCE has assigned Railey to the story — & convenient, no? (If, as she promises, she keeps you in the picture.) I guess I can understand her attitude, though as an eyewitness it bugs me. Amazing phenomena that have never before been observed & described are bound to be tarred with at least a little of the lunatic-fringe brush. It's hard, though, to see what the hoax here could be, considering how many different places reputable persons observed the phenomenon.

Am beat, don't think I can keep my eyes open another minute. Nighty-night, love (even if it is three in the afternoon for you).

Denny

EOT

From Loreau@hist.Firenze.Universnet//22:50GMT240919
Received Baring@chem.UWASH.Universnet//15:02PDT240919

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

To: Nicholas Baring
From: Denise Loreau
Re: Personal & Private

Tuesday night

Well yes, you're right, I am "horribly money-conscious" these days. But how else can I be, here, when I'm constantly being placed in a position where I have to be? & since it informs so much of my social interactions, & thus my perceptions, how can I avoid talking about it in my letters? I wish I could get you to understand what it's like here. I knew, in theory at least, that living "leanly" would be a necessity for doing this kind of dissertation. Which is to say, the BEST kind of dissertation, in history. In your field it might be analogous to the difference between doing lab research & merely a library-based analysis of research already done. Working with archival materials is the only way to do a first-rate piece of work. It's the fact that I do EUROPEAN history that makes it so difficult. Because it means I HAVE to come here to do it (since the Florentines continue to stonewall against having the ASF's holdings micrographed or read onto CDs). What can I say? I suppose if there weren't this community of scholars here it would be easier to be poor. ("Poor" by THEIR standards, not ours, I hasten to add, lest you jump all over me again!)

Anyway, if you insist that I censor my notes & letters to you, I will. But if I can't blow off steam to you, things will be even harder going for me than they already are...

Love,

Denny

EOT

From Loreau@hist.Firenze.Universnet//14:44GMT250919
Received Baring@chem.UWASH.Universnet//06:52PDT250919

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

To: Nicholas Baring
From: Denise Loreau
Re: Personal & Private

Wednesday afternoon

Your gleanings are, as you say, intriguing. I'm not sure exactly what you mean by "germ plasm" — remember, I'm a dumb-shit when it comes to science. Are we talking eggs, seeds, some special form of DNA, or what? The idea of these things — & you say there are more than one kind! — being wrapped up in egg white (that IS how I'm to translate "suspended in an albumen-like substance," isn't it?) completely blows me away. Egg white falling from the sky! If, as you say, this germ plasm can't survive for more than two hours at a time out of water, then there would seem to be a PURPOSE (or should one say rationale?) in the stuff's falling into water. (& you also say it can't live in salt water...) But if we talk about *purpose*... then things get weird again really fast, right? I mean, how could this stuff *know* to fall into fresh water? (From the SKY, yet!) Stranger, & stranger... Guess you could say these analyses of samples are creating even more mystery than before, rather than explaining it all away. After your getting all this off the Net, I'm dying to know what your SCIENCE reporter will have to say on the subject.

Tomorrow's the big day — lunch at I Tatti. Blake phoned to remind me — & to warn me to dress in my best. Guess this will put my gray linen suit to the acid test. (Now watch, all the women there will be wearing paper!)

Love,

Denny

EOT

From Loreau@hist.Firenze.Universnet//17:14GMT260919
Received Baring@chem.UWASH.Universnet//09:22PDT260919

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

To: Nicholas Baring
From: Denise Loreau
Re: Personal & Private

26 September, 2019
Thursday afternoon

Dear Nick,

Well I didn't really think it would be THAT bad. I mean. Really. So no one ever taught me how to eat fruit with a knife & fork. Does that make me a barbarian? Though I suppose it was a little gauche of me to openly announce my dissertation project (when asked: because I took care to volunteer NOTHING) as a study of the Renaissance version of white collar crime & corruption, especially under the early de Medicis (god forbid any Americana suggest the honorable Cosimo & Lorenzo tolerated (much less WERE) corrupt). Can you believe, that snobbish neighbor who lives up on the fourth floor of this palazzo (the one the porter smarmily addresses as "Contessa," & who simply gives one an icy stare when one dares to say Buona Sera in the evening to her), was one of the guests? It seems she's a friend of the professor in residence at I Tatti. Oh, & get this, there really were the litany of "usuals" present that my advisor told me to expect! A judge, an attorney (with a high forehead & a long hook nose & delicately manicured hands), a plastic surgeon (rather than a gynecologist — must be a sign of the times, eh?), a Dominican monk (who happens to be the brother of a member of the Florentine Consiglio), the Vice President of the dominant communications corporation serving Greater Tuscany, plus a few art historians & an engineer whose mission in life is to save the Leaning Tower of Pisa from falling down entirely. Oh it was jolly, let me tell you. I was the ONLY historian there! Oh, & I forgot. There was some famous chef present, too. Who was "on sabbatical," according to the Dominican monk. (Soaking up High Culture, no doubt to inspire his future cuisine!)

To start from the beginning — Blake met me at the Archivio, then we walked to her car & drove out to I Tatti. She promised me a tour of the place after lunch. Aperitifs were served (by very Slavic-looking men in full formal

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

waiters' regalia) in a room whose walls were plastered from floor to ceiling with paintings, all Italian, more than half of which originated in the Renaissance (or earlier). The room had French windows that looked out on a terrace, with a garden rolling down in terraced waves for quite a distance, before reaching the villa's vineyards & grove of olive trees. The professor's wife informed me that, per Berenson's will, I Tatti produces most of its own food (& wine), & that most of the ingredients for the lunch had been taken from the gardens... (Because of the tone she took with me, I quite nastily considered asking her whether they grew & milled their own durum, for pasta, but knew that would only dig me deeper into the role of social inferior...) What else? Oh, I don't know. The whole thing was appallingly pretentious. Don't know how Blake stands it. I mean, the idea of it is more exciting than the reality. These people so full of themselves. & the conversation (even though some of it was in English) not at all intellectually stimulating. Just little stories about this, that & the other thing. (A condescending reference to the "mass hallucination" of snow, by the bye: never fear, I breathed not a word of what you've been writing me.) I was clumsy enough dealing with the main body of the meal & trying to think in Italian at the same time. I got a grilling from the Dominican (whose tie was a COMBINATION of handmade paper & silk!, as I think was his shirt), re the language with which I appear to be framing the terms of my study — the usual bullshit about not applying neomodern democratic definitions to Trecento & Quattrocento Florence, about all that I did not understand about client-patron relations, about how Renaissance art & letters could never have flowered without such relations, & worst of all bullshit about that most dated of concepts, male "friendship" between patron & clients in that age. Right, I said, the way a mafia Don feels love & friendship for his "family" enforcers...

All of which talk didn't win me any brownie points.

But the worst moment came when they passed the fruit & cheese. Without even giving a thought to it, I helped myself to an apple & some Stilton. Imagine my horror when I saw everyone around me (& I mean EVERYONE!) using knives & forks to eat THEIR fruit! I chose to compromise — I split my apple into quarters, then ate it — UNPEELED!!! — core & all, with my FINGERS. (Horrors!) I suppose I should just have taken grapes. (Though I saw

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

people peeling them, too, & then using their forks to eat them!)

Guess I'm not cut out for the finer life. Hope I didn't embarrass Blake too badly. The meal wasn't even all that good, you know. Didn't even have a Secondo. & they were stingy with the wine. Still, the tour was DIVINE. Blake has her own study there. Imagine... & there's a real library, too. Which means Blake doesn't have to trot up to the Biblioteca Nationale & deal with that set of intransigent folks in addition to the Archivio's crew. Very nice setup indeed (if only all the snobs could be kept out).

As for the ending of this highly "civilized" afternoon, Blake had arranged for Jamie Frost to drive me back into the Centro. Jamie was a fellow at I Tatti last year. This year he lives in an old tower near Fiesole. But the weird thing is that I know that he is having an affair with Lynette. (& nothing normal, either — because a) it's clandestine; & b) he wants only anal sex with her, & is little interested in anything else.) (Lynette says they use unsalted butter.) & his regular girlfriend, Sina Nemerov, was in the car with us during the drive. (Talk about AWKWARD. Lynette speaks with the most passionate hatred for Sina, in a way that's not at all characteristic of her. I felt...compromised.) All the way back Jamie & Sina told sneery stories about the professor & his wife who are pregnant at I Tatti. (Some kind of personal thing, I bet, especially the way Sina talked about the wife. Mean to ask Lynette if she's got any idea.) & of course I kept thinking how Jamie hadn't a clue that I knew about him & Lynette...

But isn't that the way of things here — everything so, well, seamy. Money & sex, you know.... Maybe it's just that it's such a small everybody-knows-everybody-else's-business community.... Anyway, all this has made me feel anxious. & homesick. & wanting nice clean Seattle & my old comfortable relationships back.

Love,

Denny

EOT

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

From Loreau@hist.Firenze.Universnet//14:45GMT270919
Received Baring@chem.UWASH.Universnet//06:57PDT270919

To: Nicholas Baring
From: Denise Loreau
Re: Personal & Private

27 September, 2019
Friday afternoon

Nick —

I can't stand it. I just can't stand it. I don't see how I'm going to do this dissertation. & when you think about it, the whole idea of it was stupid, anyway. I should have just decided to study crime & punishment, something like that, where one can find all the documents in one obvious place, easy to access... Instead of spread all over the place in a dozen different archives, & every bit of the work an unending investigation chasing down every slightest trace of a clue...& anyway, it's not as though people don't REALLY know, in their heart of hearts, that the early Florentine Republic was basically corrupt, & run according to a modified mafia scheme, with the system set up to avoid major vendettas, while keeping the principal players happy...

In short, I've made a big mistake. I guess I just talked too smooth a line to my advisor & the rest of the dissertation committee...

I don't know how I'm going to show my face in the Archivio again. (Oh I will, don't worry. I mean, I know what I'm here for, & why I'm spending all my inheritance from my grandfather to do it.) But it's just too fucking HARD!!! Listen. I don't know WHY they did this to me today. I suppose it's because I'm an unwealthy Americana, a graduate student, a nobody. (They can't have heard the real subject of my dissertation already, could they? Anyway, they wouldn't *persecute* me for that. Though Jeff did suggest the vague wording for describing my subject of research in the letter of intro he wrote to get me my permesso...)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

So this is what happened. Like a nightmare, only *real*. I go this morning to the Deposito to pick up my documenti. One of them is an item from Notarile. I happened to have had it out two weeks ago, but because I wanted to follow a lead from it & didn't want to give up my other documenti, & given the limits on the number of items they allow you to have in the Deposito at any one time, I sent back the item from Notarile & ordered the new piece that I thought would shed some light on what I'd read in Notarile. & the new piece was very interesting. But it made me question my transcription from Notarile. So I decided to call up that item again (& of course duly gave up the spoglio I had out from Aquisit e Doni in order to stay under the limit). So this morning I pass over my little carbon copy of the request slip (the fools make us use carbon forms — not even that part of the process is computerized yet!) to the comic book readers in the Deposito, & what do I get but a verbal explosion of abuse! It all came out so fast & violent that it took me about a minute to figure out that they were objecting to my having re-ordered an item I'd had two weeks ago! (NO ONE EVER TOLD ME THERE WAS A RULE AGAINST DOING SO!!!!) (AND THERE ISN'T — EVERYONE I'VE TALKED TO SINCE THE INCIDENT ASSURES ME THAT EVERYONE!!!!!! FREQUENTLY REORDERS THINGS, BECAUSE OF THE LIMIT!!!!!!!!!)

Naturally I tried to explain that I'd needed a second look at it. But no, that wasn't good enough! They just kept repeating over & over — in a high-pitched accented voice that was clearly meant to be an imitation of me: "Est finito, questo documento." & when saying "questo documento" stabbing their index fingers at the filza in question, to make clear that I had said I was done with the document & wanted it sent back to the stacks.

& then the man who presides over the Sala di Consultare came back to the Deposito & added HIS fifty lire to the chorus. Jesus! You'd think I'd tried to write my notes in pen or stuck a 25 watt bulb in one of their nasty little 15 watt reading lamps! You must not do this again, the prissy little jerk harangued me. So I tried to explain to HIM. But unfortunately, the more upset I got, the less Italian I seemed to remember, & LATIN & FRENCH (but especially the former) started to come out of my mouth, as though evil spirits had overtaken me. Ho bisogno, I started out in Italian, licet habere, popped out in Latin, tre documenti, I reverted back to Italian, eodem tempore, I

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

concluded in Latin. I suppose it was that that did it. The head honcho of the Sala goggled at me, then exchanged looks of "la Americana e pazzia!" (I could fairly hear them muttering "Americana pazzia" under their breath), & grabbed me by the arm & marched me past all those rows of reading desks in the Sala (EVERYONE was watching!) & up the stairs, to La Directrice (which is to say, to Palla herself).

Her hair a magnificent structure combed high over an extreme wire edifice that looked more Fellini than neomodern, her collar a rival to any worn by Elizabeth I of England, Palla bestowed on me the most scathing, glacial glare, then very quietly told me I had wasted everyone's time with my lack of consideration, & that I must never again send back something I wasn't finished with. That the staff had no time to cater to such flightiness. & then she returned her eyes to her computer screen & ignored me as I tried, again, to explain in my polyglot mixture of tongues, that I'd had to do it that way. Signorina, the fellow who'd dragged me up the stairs hissed in my ear, then strong-armed me out of the august presence (while half a dozen men who could be mistaken for his clones sniggered behind their hands at the spectacle).

They might as well have stood me in the center of the Sala near the request desk, torn my shirt off my back & given me twenty-five lashes for my effrontery. Except for the absence of physical pain (though my stomach has been full of acid all day), I felt as though I'd been publicly disgraced in just that way. Returning to the Deposito, getting my documenti & creeping to a desk far from the window (since they'd kept me so long all the well-lighted desks were gone), I fantasized standing on my chair & beating my breast & shouting MEA CULPA! MEA CULPA! MEA MAXIMA CULPA!

But I figured they'd have me arrested for disturbing the peace & carted off for public display of madness, & never allow me back in again...

I want to come home. I miss you. I feel like shit. (Maybe I am shit. Maybe this really is all my fault.) Americana stulta! No. Not LATIN!!! Americana STUPIDA!!! MOLTO MOLTO STUPIDA!!!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Questa Americana misses her Nicky...}

EOT

From Loreau@hist.Firenze.Universnet//18:25GMT280919
Received Baring@chem.UWASH.Universnet//10:28PDT280919

To: Nicholas Baring
From: Denise Loreau
Re: Personal & Private

The bells of Ognissanti, Nick, the bells are pealing & pealing & pealing, sending their deep mellow clanging sailing in through the casement windows — with the smell of orange blossoms. Or sort of. Can't really describe the smell, except that it's a sweet citrus fragrance, with some zing, that makes one's insides melt with the pleasure of it.

I think it must be the flowers that have sprung up in the Arno — their many tiny petals are blowing everywhere — like our cherry trees in the spring, Nick. & it's like spring here today (except that it's troppo caldo for a Seattle May, you know?)... & everyone is walking around in that joyous kind of ecstasy that sometimes bites one after a particularly nasty winter.

Thanks for the note of support — though it was yesterday I needed it. Today I'm so happy to be here. The sky's the purest azure, the air is sparkling & scented, & people everywhere are laughing & smiling. Even the Contessa smiled at me when I came in a few minutes ago, smiled & greeted me with the most pleasant of Buona Seras, & a few minutes before that the transvestite prostitutes who hold the street in back of Ognissanti.

Ciao, love!

(But oh do I wish you were here! I'm FIERCELY horny!)

Denny
EOT

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SPECIAL CHRISTMAS RATES

THE MAGAZINE OF
Fantasy & Science Fiction

$19.97 for the first one-year subscription

$15.00 for each additional one-year subscription

Send Fantasy and Science Fiction as a Christmas gift:

(PLEASE PRINT)

To _____
Name of Recipient

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

To _____
Name of Recipient

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

54JG1

☐ I enclose $ _____

☐ Bill me after Christmas

☐ Enter my own subcription

☐ New ☐ Renewal

Foreign and Canadian postage: $5.00 per year. Make checks payable in U.S. funds, drawn on a U.S. bank.

My name _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Gift cards will be sent to you, for you to personalize with your own signature.

Mercury Press, Inc.
143 Cream Hill Rd.
West Cornwall, CT 06796

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

From Loreau@hist.Firenze.Universnet//23:02GMT290919
Received Baring@chem.UWASH.Universnet//15:04PDT290919

To: Nicholas Baring
From: Denise Loreau
Re: Personal & Private

Sunday night, late

Sorry, Nick, that you sent me so many messages that went unanswered. I've been mostly out — partying, actually. Chrissy Fowler threw the most joyous of bashes last night, on the spur of the moment. & I stayed until FIVE A.M.! Then slept for only a few hours before the Iversons asked me out — & treated me to the most lovely of luncheons at a ristorante on the other side of the Arno, near Santa Maria del Carmine. (We ate outdoors, on a patch of the piazza. It was divine — especially since the air still has that wonderful scent in it. My idea of ambrosia, I guess — ambrosia one inhales.)

Which reminds me. About your many & many notes. Nick, you MUST NOT worry about this scent. Stop asking me to wear a face mask, because there's no way I'm going to do it! I appreciate your concern, but if you could smell it, you'd know it couldn't possibly be anything noxious. I agree, it's possible that it's coming from the flowers in the Arno (in fact most of us believe it does). But just because there have never been flowers in the Arno before (that anyone has heard of) doesn't mean they're necessarily a bad thing. (Or "unnatural," I think that's the word you used?) So what if they did come from the germ plasm that snowed into so many rivers last week? I don't see that as a reason to get hysterical!

Do you think there's any way you could get someone to pay your expenses to investigate here — as a chemist? Because baby, I could really use a few hours alone with you, pronto! Seriously, work on it. (Anything's possible, you know. ANYTHING!!!!)
Oh I miss you more than you can know. My body burns with passion. & I do mean *burns*! (& a certain place is, accordingly, awfully wet.)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Think about it, Nick.

Love & many many kisses & other similarly beautiful things —

Denny

EOT

From Loreau@hist.Firenze.Universnet//12:23GMT300919
Received Baring@chem.UWASH.Universnet//06:08PDT300919

To: Nicholas Baring
From: Denise Loreau
Re: Personal & Private

God, Nick, I'm in love with the World, everything here is Bella, Bella, Bellissima! Oh how I WISH YOU WERE HERE!!!!

Molto, molto l'amore!}

EOT

From Loreau@hist.Firenze.Universnet//22:42GMT021019
Received Baring@chem.UWASH.Universnet//16:57PDT021019

To: Nicholas Baring
From: Denise Loreau
Re: Personal & Private

Monday (or is it Tuesday? I seem to have lost track)

Nick —

I'm sorry my not answering your messages has got you so worried. I promise

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to do better in the future. (Though really, how can I answer when you send seven or eight a day, especially when I'm hardly ever home!) Listen, it's really truly beautiful here, more beautiful than I've ever known any place to be. This afternoon a myriad little bees & butterflies suddenly appeared in the air, mixing & meshing with the lovely white petals. Like shards of rainbows cut loose in the air, darting this way & that, shimmering with the purest, most intense colors any painter has ever had on his or her palette.

& speaking of painters & palettes! This morning I tried to go to the Uffizi. I had the most intense urge to see the Botticelli again — I think I dreamed about it, for certainly that loveliest of faces was in my mind when I woke this morning. But it was not to be. Not only was the Uffizi so packed it was hard to move through any of its rooms, but I couldn't even wedge my way into the room with the Botticelli much less catch a glimpse of it. (As though the entire city had the same idea.)

Funny. The Iversons had a similar experience — only they went to the Accademia to see the David — with the same degree of success as I had trying to see the Botticelli. So they & I packed our string bags with bread, cheese, fruit & mineral water, & trooped over to the Boboli Gardens for a picnic. We had a wonderful time, played all sorts of children's games with the girls, games I'd forgotten I even know.

I'm so sleepy. Will have to stop very soon. I half-suspect part of the reason I've been feeling so wonderfully sane & healthy lately is that I've been sleeping for fourteen hours at a stretch since the night of Chrissy's party.

But I did want to say that your doom & gloom is inappropriate, Nick. There's nothing wrong with my feeling good (& even if I were guilty of being in a "state of prolonged & excessive euphoria", what would be wrong with that???). Also, I think it's *fabulous* that Japan has gotten "snow" too. As for coming home now! No way! As I said before, I'd love it if you were to come here — then at least you'd see there's no cause for your alarm over this "unknown aerobic agent."

Lighten up, love! Life's too beautiful to waste it worrying about what terrible

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thing is indicated by the fact that a lot of people are feeling better than they ever have before!

Con l'amore tantissimo — e baci molti!

Denny

EOT

From Loreau@hist.Firenze.Universnet//12:04GMT041019
Received Baring@chem.UWASH.Universnet//10:27PDT041019

To: Nicholas Baring
From: Denise Loreau
Re: Personal & Private

4 October, 2019
Friday morning

Nick —

Have you really been trying to call me since Tuesday? I've been out a lot, but have been sleeping at home. Sorry for your worry. But sophisticated systems do sometimes break, you know. Have you checked with U.S. West? It's probably something at that end. You know how shoddy U.S. work can be.

But I want to assure you that I am in the finest shape possible. For all your fears, not a single sign of neurological degeneracy has shown up, not a trace of pulmonary damage. My body is, in short, working like a charm. (Except that it would LOVE some cuddling from a certain person with the initials N.B., not to mention days & nights of quality fucking. Which is what the Iversons have been doing lately, in every room in their apartment, so much so that the girls, who are still a little giggly on the subject of sex, have taken to hanging out over here, whether I'm home or not. Which reminds me: if my phone rang while I was out, the Iversons would have gotten it, since we share the same line!)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

As for the various European markets closing down, I don't see why you're so upset. People were too money-oriented over here anyway. & now they're focusing their attention on the beautiful side of life. As for the rumor you heard on the Net, to the effect that Joachimists are declaring the New Millennium, they've been doing that for ages already. It is true they wanted to burn some paintings, but a Franciscan brother (barefoot, in a coarse gray angle-length robe & tonsured, his beard a blend of gray & white reaching his chest), speaking in a marvelously mellifluous voice convinced them that aesthetic objects inspire spirituality in people who might otherwise have to be written off (soul-wise). I don't know what it is the media are saying about us over there, but no doubt they've got it wrong. I hate to say it, but my fellow Americans are known for their painfully tight assholes (which inevitably accompany greed & selfishness, for the obvious reasons). & as I've lately discovered, you can't have a tight asshole & the Good Life at one & the same time.

But hey, I'm preaching, aren't I. & that's the last thing I feel like doing. Live, Nick, LIVE! It's time we stopped spending our lives dying. Life IS for living, believe it or not!

Which is exactly what I am doing.

Amore, love, amore!

Denny

EOT

From Loreau@hist.Firenze.Universnet//11:34GMT051019
Received Baring@chem.UWASH.Universnet//19:57PDT041019

To: Nicholas Baring
From: Denise Loreau
Re: Personal & Private

Nick —

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Please calm yourself. Really. I beg you. Your tone is one of abject terror, & this concerns me. (Again, I'm telling you you would be a lot happier here, I ASSURE YOU.) I can't say I think the New York stock market crash is a bad thing. The panic you feel at this, though — THAT is truly terrible. You need to take some perspective, Nick! As for the U.S. Government's decision to quarantine all its borders "until such time as adequate decontamination measures are implemented," well that strikes me as simply pathetic. (It certainly doesn't frighten me to think they might not let me back in. More important is whether they will let you OUT!) So much fear, so much anxiety, so much dread over truly inconsequential matters — it grieves me, Nick. Particularly since it reminds me of how much of my life I spent gibbering in terror rather than LIVING!

I know nothing about hormonal "aberrations" (though I can imagine how sorry those people are for having returned to the U.S. at all — only to be penned up in some dreary "sterile" place to be poked by robots with needles & have X-rays beamed at them & wires inserted in places they don't belong). I do believe men's breasts are filling out. & maybe mine are a little larger. I'm certain Palla's are, for instance, for as far as I could tell she had very small breasts before, but when I saw her dancing in front of the Duomo the other day, they were very clearly full and round. Actually she looked wonderful — radiant, if you don't mind my using such a word. (Her hair looks so much better short than combed high over wire sculptures as she used to wear it.) Her face was flushed. She was wearing only a pair of paper shorts and paper and silk bracelets, necklaces and earrings. And her pleasure was open and shining.) If there is a "general rise in estrogen levels in both sexes," I don't see what the big deal is, Nick. So we'll all have stronger bones! & men will have protection from coronary disease. Big deal!

More important is what is happening here. We no longer have motor vehicles in the Centro at all (barring the occasional light truck delivering food.) Which is to say it's safe to walk as and where one wishes. Just this morning there was a lovely ceremony in the Piazza della Republicana in which all the small arms of the entire brigade of carabinieri stationed in Tuscany were piled up. The weapons will be melted down at a smelter outside the Centro. The metal will be used to cast a new statue, to be erected out in the Arno. This statue

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

won't be named "Liberty," though, but "Joy." & it won't be an image of a female human body, but of flowers being buzzed by those scintillant rainbow bees & butterflies.

I now know what "peace" means, Nick. It is more than contentment. But it begins with the shedding of fear & anxiety. Which is what, I'm sad to say, you can't begin to imagine. (Yet.) Maybe someday... you will come here. Or Joy will come to you. Nothing could make me happier, love.

Denny
EOT

From Loreau@hist.Firenze.Universnet//14:58GMT071019
Received Baring@chem.UWASH.Universnet//23:22PDT091019

To: Nicholas Baring
From: Denise Loreau
Re: Personal & Private

Nick, love —

You're right. I hadn't really noticed how much longer our e-mail transmissions are taking. As you say, if this mode of communication goes, we will be lost to one another. With phone service so sketchy & travel interdicted, this is our only link. (It has occurred to me lately that telepathy might be possible, but the fact is we wouldn't know how to begin: though I believe it would start with the body, & be easiest between bodies that have shared Joy.)

This is the beginning, you know, of a new epoch in the world. I do not believe we will ever be so foolish as to go back to fear, anxiety & all the evils that attend these weaknesses. (Lynette believes that Joy is the means to a new evolutionary stage — that casting out all fear will allow us to leave behind our most destructive animal instincts.) When I think of all we have forgotten, all that has been in our bodies, waiting, all the time, waiting for Discovery! & I just know, Nick, I just know that if you could taste Joy, you would embark upon Discovery, too!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I can only shake my head when I hear that the President of the United States has declared a State of Emergency. It's not just that they're afraid of Joy. I believe they're afraid of living without fear & anxiety, because these have been the bases for all our government has been & done for a long long time. (I've no expertise in U.S. history, so I don't know if they were just always like that, & impressions to the contrary simply the propaganda of myth.)

Once again I'm going to say it: come to me, love! (Yes, & in your next letter you will urge me, again, to wear a face mask & be careful about what I eat! I know, I know, we are talking at cross-purposes. But it is love that moves me, & fear that moves you. Which should tell you something, Nick. Don't you think?) Come to me & taste Joy & Live.

But I've been at this too long — there's dancing every afternoon in the piazza, as long as the weather holds, & Lynette's just arrived now, to sweep me away. (When it rains, we will really celebrate!) If the President should "declare war" (but on whom? Doesn't it take two to fight?) then undoubtedly we will, as you say, be cut off altogether. In which case I want you to remember me as last saying these words: Taste Joy, & Lose Fear Forever — for that's the only way to Live.

Denny

EOT

1 March, 2147

To: The Respected Documentary Contributor, Gendron 14
Dear Respected Documentary Contributor:

I HAVE READ with deep appreciation the documents you so kindly sent me. They are exactly the sort of thing I am looking for. Greater detail, analysis and insight would have been welcome; but in persons of the prewar period such a combination of skills must have been rare, if not nonexistent.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

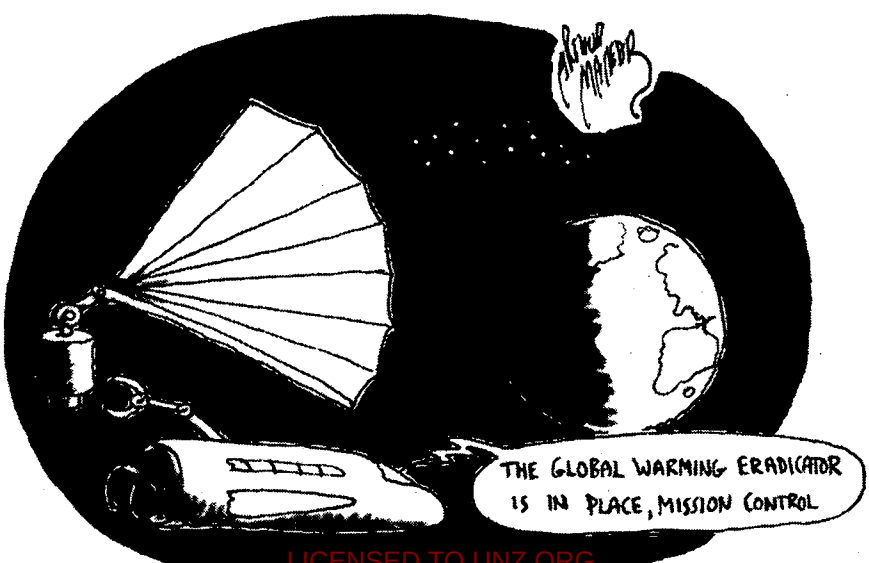
I found especially interesting the comment about evolutionary stages made by the person identified only as "Lynette" (copies of the earlier correspondence might be helpful here — but I assume such earlier "e-mail" is no longer extant?). It is a pity that communication broke down with the U.S. Government's panic and reckless precipitation of war. Undoubtedly you are aware that a "Declaration of War" was made by the U.S. Congress only twelve hours after the time given for Nicholas Baring's receipt of Denise Loreau's message.

As to verifying the authenticity of the documents, I can do this only indirectly — through documenting Nicholas Baring's career and his official existence as a U.S. "citizen," and by the *lack* of documentation for Denise Loreau after her departure from Seattle, Washington. (The records that could have been used to document her travel from the United States to the City-State of Florentia, Europe, have been lost.)

In closing, I wish to thank you for the pleasure afforded to me in reading a firsthand account of the advent of "Joy" (as Denise Loreau calls it) to the world. We must never forget what we once were; nor the first touches and steps and words of the child learning to taste and touch life — even if that child is a biologically developed adult. My thanks, Gendron 14.

Respectfully and appreciatively yours in Life,

Elihannu 09



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Fantasy&ScienceFiction
MARKET PLACE

BOOKS-MAGAZINES

S-F FANTASY MAGAZINES, BOOKS. Catalog $1.00. Collections purchased (large or small). Robert Madle, 4406 Bestor Dr., Rockville, MD 20853.

PULPS, HARDBOUNDS, PAPERBACKS, 50 page catalog for $2, buy, sell, trade. Graham Holroyd, 19 Borrowdale Dr., Rochester, NY 14626. 716-225-4879.

200,000 SF and Mystery paperbacks, hardcovers, magazines in stock. Free catalogs. PANDORA'S BOOKS, Box F-54, Neche, ND 58265.

BARRY R. LEVIN SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY LITERATURE. Rare and first editions. Catalogs issued. 726 Santa Monica Blvd., #201, Santa Monica, CA 90401.

SEND 50¢ FOR CATALOG of Scientifantasy books & Pulps. Canford, Drawer 216, Freeville, NY 13068.

SF/HORROR/MYSTERY paperbacks. New & Used. Free catalog! T.D. Bell, 526 Leahy Lane, Ballston Spa, NY 12020.

SF, FANTASY & HORROR bought & Sold. Collections purchased. List $1.00. Ron Czerwien, 1805 Lynndale Rd., Madison, WI 53711.

FREE CATALOGS of Science Fiction/Fantasy pulps, digests, paperbacks, hardcovers. Collections purchased (large or small). Ray Bowman, Box 167F, Carmel, IN 46032.

25% OFF! Unlimited selection. No obligation! Minimum order: 10 books. For information, write POB 563, Athens, GA 30603.

MAGIC REALISM MAGAZINE: "Fascinating"—Roger Zelazny. $14.95/year. Box 650-FS, Orem, UT 84059.

SF BOOKS AND VIDEOS. Large selection. Discount Prices. Free catalogue. (800) 34-SCIFI.

TAPES/CASSETTES

BOOKS ON AUDIO TAPE. Star Trek, Star Wars, Asimov to Zelazny. Free catalog. Atco Books, Box 690791, Houston, TX 77269-0791.

OLD TIME RADIO PROGRAMS on quality tapes. Great classic science fiction! Also comedy, mysteries, westerns, music. Free catalogue. Carl Y. Froelich, 2 Heritage Farm, New Freedom, Pennslyvania 17349.

MISCELLANEOUS

STARBORN ALUMNI and VETERANS! Authentic shirts from YOUR school (Mars Tech, Galactic Naval Academy, more) and YOUR old outfit (Draco Marines, Galactic Occupation Forces/Earth, more). Free Catalog. INTERSTELLAR, Department A, Box 161, Naperville, IL 60566.

FANTASY AIRBRUSH ARTISTS wanted! Established publisher seeks artists with strong airbrush skills, a thorough knowledge of fantasy art, and a proven ability to portray the dynamics of human anatomy. Must have portfolio. Send samples to: Managing Editor, P.O. Box 943, 1610 Porter Wagoner Blvd., West Plains, MO 65775.

BE THE HERO OR THE HEROINE! We'll make YOU the STAR of the story! Tales of Horror, Fantasy, Action and Erotica. Only $10. A great gift! Write or call: BOOTSTRAP-FSF, PO Box 184, Manasquan, NJ 08736-0184; (908) 295-7981.

MANUSCRIPTS wanted, all types. Publisher with 70-year tradition. 1-800-695-9599.

TREKKER'S FUNZINE: Hours of Trekker puzzles, games, trivia. Fun! Sample $2.00. MJM Publications, POB 5058, Harrisburg, PA 17110-5058.

PAPER FANTASIES MAGAZINE. Where imaginations meet. Find friends. Share dreams. LSASE: PF32, Box 269, Loughman, FL 33858-0269.

MEN: MEET YOUR Ideal Mate. All countries. All Ages. Free Exciting Details, Photolog. EWC, Box 1059M1, Rialto, CA 92377-1059.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COMING ATTRACTIONS

OUR FEBRUARY issue marks the return of **Richard Bowes** and his wonderful urban fantasy landscape. Richard's previous stories following Kevin Grierson have received quite a bit of attention, and this one should be no different. "The Shadow and the Gunman" is a prequel to the main action in Grierson's life — a discussion of how he got to his mythical Manhattan. Set in Massachusetts, "The Shadow and the Gunman" is a powerful portrayal of a young man on the edge.

The cover art comes from **Ron Walotsky**, whose stunning illustration of **Charles de Lint's** story, "Bridges," in our Oct/Nov 1992 issue received a Hugo nomination for Best Original Artwork. Ron's latest work illustrates "Busy Dying," a weird near-future sf story by **Brian Stableford,** about a suicide artist, and the state's attempt to understand him — and to stop him.

Also in February, **Robert Reed** returns with a hard sf story. "Treasure Buried" is the story of Wallace, a company man, who stumbles onto an idea that no human should ever find, a secret that may make him more — or less — than he really is.

In future issues, we have some exciting fiction by familiar and unfamiliar names. **Esther M. Friesner, Jerry Oltion,** and **Kent Patterson** will contribute some much needed levity. **Allen Steele, Gregory Benford,** and **David Brin** will provide science fiction. **Jack Cady,** whose "The Night We Buried Road Dog," was the talk of last year's issues, will return with a subtle fantasy. **Tanith Lee, Elizabeth Moon,** and **Pat Murphy** will add a touch of horror. **Dale Bailey,** who made his debut in our pages last year, will return, as will **Lynn Coulter** and **L. Timmel Duchamp.** In 1994, we will introduce a new name in the field: **Felicity Savage.** Felicity is a young dynamo, born in Ireland, living in the States. She has sold us three stories so far, and just sold her first two novels as well. So, if you haven't renewed yet, it's time. You wouldn't want to miss any of these exciting stories.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

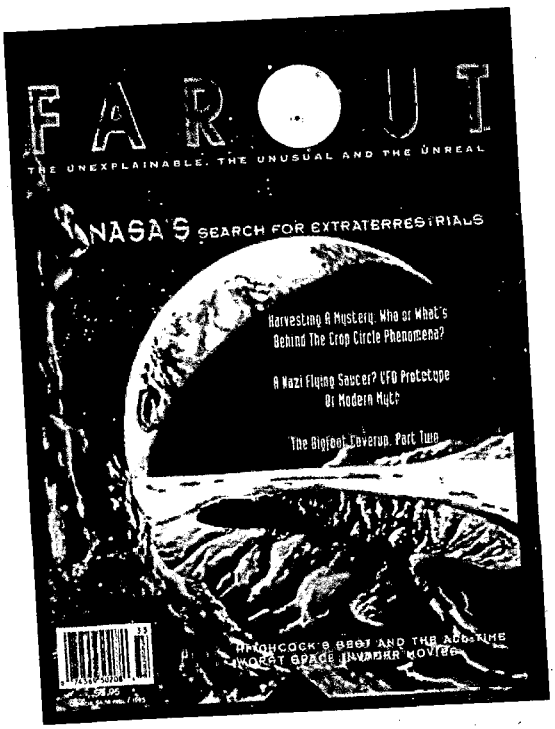
❀ Collector's Items: Bound Proofs ❀

The following are pre-publication proofs, bound in paper covers, easy to read and valuable to collect. All are in excellent condition. Priced very reasonably at $15.00 each (add $1.50 postage and handling for one book, .75 for each additional book. Please give several alternates if possible (only one copy of each is available). Send check with order to: **Mercury Press, Inc. 143 Cream Hill Rd., West Cornwall, CT 06796.**

Poul Anderson, *Harvest of Stars*
Lou Aronica, Amy Stout and Betsy Mitchell, *Full Spectrum 4*
Piers Anthony, *Letters to Jenny*
Piers Anthony, *Cold Allies*
Piers Anthony, *Alien Plot*
Will Baker, *Shadow Hunter*
John Calvin Batchelor, *Peter Nevsky and the True Story of the Russian Moon Landing*
Robert Bloch, *Once Around the Bloch*
Ben Bova, *Empire Builders*
Ben Bova, *Sam Gunn, Unlimited*
Ben Bova, *Challenges*
David Brin, *Glory Season*
Terry Brooks, *The Talisman of Shannara*
Steven Brust, *Agyar*
Matthew Bunson, *The Vampire Encyclopedia*
Jeffrey A. Carver, *Dragon Rigger*
Alfred Coppel, *Glory*
Greg Costikyan, *By the Sword*
Tony Daniel, *Warpath*
Charles deLint, *Dreams Underfoot*
Stephen Donaldson, ed., *Strange Dreams*
M. J. Engh, *Rainbow Man*
Elizabeth Engstrom, *Nightmare Flower*
Dennis Etchison, *Shadow Man*
Robert L. Forward, *Camelot 30K*
Jean Mark Gawron, *Dream of Glass*
Lisa Goldstein, *The Red Magician*
Lisa Goldstein, *Strange Devices of the Sun and Moon*
William Gibson, *Virtual Light*
Elizabeth Hand, *Icarus Descending*
Jack Haldeman & Jack Dann, *High Steel*
Mary Hanner, *Rapid Growth*
Harry Harrison, *Stainless Steel Visions*
Brian Jacques, *Salamandastrom*
Gwyneth Jones, *White Queen*
Katherine Kerr, *Days of Blood & Fire*
Kathe Koja, *Skin*
Damon Knight, *Why Do Birds*
Stephen Lawhead, *The Endless Knot*
Stephen Lawhead, *The Silver Hand*
Tanith Lee, *The Book of the Mad*
Morgan Llywelyn, *The Elementals*
Brian Lumley, *The Last Aerie*
Ian McDonald, *The Broken Land*
Andre Norton, *Golden Trillium*
Andre Norton & P. M. Griffin, *Redline the Stars*
Paul Preuss, *Core*
Mike Resnick, *Purgatory*
Michela Roessner, *Vanishing Point*
Kristine Katherine Rusch, *Facade*
Melissa Scott, *Burning Bright*
Lucius Shepard, *The Golden*
Robert Silverberg, *The Collected Stories of Robert Silverberg, Vol. 1: Secret Sharers*
John E.Stith, *Manhattan Transfer*
Judith Tarr, *Lord of the Two Lands*
Jack Vance, *Throy*
Lawrence Watt-Evans & Esther Friesner, *Split Heirs*
Margaret Weis, *Ghost Legions*
Margaret Weis & Tracy Hickman, *The Hand of Chaos*
Martha Wells, *The Element of Fire*
Kelly Wilde, *Angel Kiss*
Gene Wolfe, *Nightside the Long Sun*
Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, *Darker Jewels*
Roger Zelazny & Robert Sheckley, *If At Faust You Don't Succeed*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE UNEXPLAINABLE, THE UNUSUAL AND THE UNREAL


FAR OUT
THE UNEXPLAINABLE, THE UNUSUAL AND THE UNREAL
NASA'S SEARCH FOR EXTRATERRESTRIALS
Harvesting A Mystery: Who or What's Behind The Crop Circle Phenomena?
A Nazi Flying Saucer? UFO Prototype Or Modern Myth?
The Bigfoot Caveman, Part Two

SAVE 44% OFF THE COVER PRICE!

YES! Sign me up for one year of FAR-OUT! for only $9.95, saving me 44% off the cover price!

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

☐Payment Enclosed

Charge My ☐Visa ☐MC

_____ Exp. _____

Signature _____

MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE ON ALL UNMAILED ISSUES IF NOT SATISFIED. Make checks payable to L.F.P., Inc. Foreign add $10. Basic subscription rate: $9.95. Your first issue will arrive in 8 to 12 weeks.WATCH FOR IT!

OFFER EXPIRES MARCH 1, 1994 CNYXO

Mail to: FAR-OUT! Magazine, P.O. Box 16507, No. Hollywood, CA 91615-9955

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED